Adventure

August
15 Cents

"FORBIDDEN TREASURE"

A stirring serial of the Iceland coast

Begins in this number

Copyright, 1921 (Trade Mark Registered) by

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, PUBLISHERS OF EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

Inside Front Page
Missing

BOUND MAY 1943

Volume 2 ADVENTURE Number 4

CONTENTS FOR AUGUST, 1911

Forbidden Treasure. A Serial Story. I A Tale of Adventure in Iceland	Beatrix Demarest Lloyd and Esther Martin	571
My Adventures with Your Money—Who Got It—and How. V Some Inside Stories—Nipissing and Goldfield Con.	George Graham Rice	587
The Mystery of Prince Marmoroff's Gold Plate. A Complete Novelette A Tale of Adam Newman and the Burglars	Albert Kinross	603
The Houseboat Sweepstakes. A Story	Fred Squire Brown	622
The Voice of the Dead. A Story The Adventure of the Captain's Ghost	Lincoln Colcord	629
The Vagabond. A Story	Burle J. Jones	637
The Unknown Man. A Story	Frederick Irving Anderson	645
The Phantom Battery. A Story A Story of the Sepoy Rebellion	Talbot Mundy	651
Frazzled Friskies. A Story The Adventure of Jake Buchmuller and the Breakfast Food	John A. Heffernan	657
The Ivory Poachers of the Lado Enclave. An Article	W. Robert Foran	667
Captain Curlew's Atonement. A Story	C. Langton Clarke	673
The Master. A Story The Tale of the Strength of a Quiet Man	George Buchanan Fife	680
The Road. A Serial Story. II A Romance of Americans in the Balkans	Frank Savile	691
The Conjuror of the Clouds. A Story A "Gray Ghost" Story	Muriel A. Pollexfen	711
The Passing of the Pals. A Story	Hiram Moe Greene	721
Von Hoydonck, Man. An Article The True Story of a Famous Mutiny	Frank Marshall White	726
Sigole! A Story	Walter Archer Frost	733
A Venture in Contraband. A Complete Novelette A Romance of the Opium Trade	H. D. Couzens	738

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
FEB 15 1943
LAW LIBRARY

Issued monthly. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents
Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.
Trade-mark Registered; Copyright 1911 by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain
Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
Erman J. Ridgway, President Wm. L. Jennings, Secretary and Treasurer
Spr[illegible] Macdougal Streets, New York City
[illegible], Covent Garden, London, W. C., England
Entered at the New York Post-office as Second Class Matter

Digitized by Google

ADVENTURE for SEPTEMBER

"***My Adventures with Your Money***"—*my* adventures with *your* money. That means something. As you have convinced yourself if you have been reading George Graham Rice's series of articles bearing that title. If you have happened not to read them, stop reading this, turn over a few more pages and begin reading them *now*. You can begin reading Mr. Rice's series anywhere, but there's only one place you can stop—the end.

And in the September ADVENTURE Mr. Rice gives us the inside of the great Rawhide stampede, the promotion of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Co., and—well, the September number of ADVENTURE is the next one after this.

That September number is going to be a good thing to have anyway. Good to take to the country, good to take home, on the train. To be frank, you can take it anywhere. In return, it will take you everywhere. To Europe, Asia, Africa, America, the Seven Seas. Twenty adventures for fifteen cents—1⅓ adventures for a cent. As advertised. Each month only.

And the stories are real stories, with "something doing" in every one. Stories of strong men—action—courage—mystery—brave deeds—excitement. But always true to life. Nothing soft or slushy. No better way of taking exercise without perspiration in this hot weather.

"***The Third Mate,***" by Frederick Booth, for example. There is a man that *is* a man! Ever cast on a desert island with a very ladylike lady wearing leaves? Read "***The Skulkers,***" by Stuart B. Stone. If you've noticed that there's been a little trouble down in Mexico lately, you'll be interested in "***José Bobo, Cheerful Villain,***" by John A. Avirette, the man who wrote that true diary of adventure in the Gulf of California in our June issue. Charles Neville Buck's complete novelette, "***The Beneficent Burglar,***" has a lot of action, a lot more of humor, and a love-story besides. "***Black Magic,***" by H. C. Bailey, gives us a kind of hero new in fiction—"Witless Dick," a country booby, who isn't a booby and is very far from being witless. Incidentally, that story is exceptionally well written. (That, as you may have noticed, is what ADVENTURE stands for—its stories are red-blooded and full of excitement, *but* they are *well written.* We like red, but not yellow.)

Then there is the climax story in the "Gray Ghost" airship series; "***When the Rain Was Red,***" by Captain Fritz Duquesne (the famous Boer scout, spy, hunter and fighting-man who now has before Congress a bill for domesticating various foreign animals in the United States—the llama, giraffe, hippopotamus, springbok, dik-dik, bustard, etc.); another article on buried and sunken treasures still unfound; the strong Balkan serial and the thrilling Iceland serial, and—lots more.

MAGAZINES AT HOME

WE SHOULD like to make a friendly suggestion to ***our readers.*** If you are accustomed to purchase your magazines from the newsstand, and if through press of business or forgetfulness you missed certain numbers, tell your newsdealer to deliver your ADVENTURE and EVERYBODY'S to you each month. You will surely get them then.

And a suggestion to the ***newsdealer.*** A magazine route is just as practical as a newspaper route, and if properly handled is a great convenience to the newsdealer's customers. Wouldn't it be a good thing for the newsdealer to ask customers who buy ADVENTURE or EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE: "May I deliver this regularly as published?"

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

Digitized by Google

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

Vol. 2 Adventure No. 4

Registered in the United States Patent Office

AUGUST 1911

FORBIDDEN TREASURE

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd & Esher Martin

CHAPTER I

ICELAND

ALMOST from the hour that land had been sighted Mark Stuart had stood in the bow of the schooner, watching the misty patch on the horizon develop into a land of black mountains jutting up from silent white wastes. The fumid air bore a stench of drying fish mingled with a faint exhalation from the tarred walls of the straggling warehouses that edged the shore. The few streets of the meager town behind these were overshadowed by a gigantic bluff crowned with a rude tower of stone.

The Captain of the far-journeying *Carrie L. Hooper*, of Gloucester, Massachusetts, had relinquished his craft to the native pilot and stopped beside his solitary passenger, also gazing shoreward. "Wal, son, now that you see Iceland, are you as 'tarnal sot on going ashore?" he asked grimly.

Mark Stuart laughed. "I haven't come all this way for nothing," he said. "And I'm interested already. What is that tower up there on the hill? It's delightfully like the old thing at Newport, that they claim these very people built."

The Captain shrugged his thick shoul-

Copyright, 1911, by The Ridgway Company. All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

ders. "Fust time I come here, I asked that question too," he answered. "When you go ashore you kin ask. And ask till—— freezes over. And there ain't a man jack but wat'll wall his eye and look like all his folks was sick to home and say in their outlandish gibberish that he really don't know.' The Captain spat resentfully into the water. "They're a hoodooed lot, livin' in a goblin country," he said finally. "You'd better stay and go halibut fishin' with us."

"I'll find fairies instead of goblins," said Stuart. "Here's a mystery before I step ashore."

"Wal," said Jewett, "maybe the Government kin pay for fairy-stories. But if your lay is volcanoes and that sort of stuff, you might ev found 'em in likelier places."

Stuart, staring at the ruin, did not see the kindly look from the narrow blue eyes. "I'd be right glad to keep you, son," said the Captain. "Being stranded on the *Carrie L.* with this bunch for two months——!"

"You forget you have Mr. Healy," said Stuart maliciously. He knew what explosion would follow.

"Healy! Son of a gun! Puttin' on airs! Common seaman!" It had gone on like incessant thunder during the entire trip. "Jes' 'cause the tarnation cuss ran a scow on a reef once, he'll put on captain's airs, will he? I'll larn him!"

"I saw Healy laying off soon after the pilot came aboard," said Stuart, provoking the wrath anew. "Said he was sick."

The Captain swore and spat again. "I'll get him a nurse," he said. "I'd hate to have him do too much."

"Why—look!" said Stuart sharply. The schooner, in rounding the point into the harbor, which lies pocketwise on the landward side of the town, had sighted a large white steam yacht riding haughtily at anchor among the noticeably few sailing craft. "I didn't expect to see anything like that here!"

Jewett nodded. "Maybe you've set the fashion of spendin' Christian money up here," he said. "The pilot says she's got a mate sick and dying up at their dinged hospital they're so proud of. He don't know nothing else about it, except that her owner is rich and idle—which is an easy guess." He turned like a ship under full sail coming about. "Remember, Olavur Haldr is the man you want—keeps the Clubhouse, they call it. He'll get ponies and guides for you. Kin speak some English. Used to be timber surveyor in the Danish yards. You'll get your last decent food at his place—so eat hearty."

"I will," said Stuart. "I've had no lunch."

"When a man neglects his food," said Jewett sententiously, "he certainly is focussed on his job." He took one last look shoreward and snorted. "Stinks, don't it? Blind pilot could run you in here."

Stuart could see as they neared the landing that the dock itself was burdened with fish. And small armies of ponies stood by, great packets of the dried and salted article strapped to their sides, while the rocky shore was covered with rows and rings of severed fish-heads—such was the scrupulous poverty of the place. Men, women, and children dressed in heavy wadmol waited stolidly to see the schooner dock.

Even in the hurried parting between Stuart and the Captain, after the *Carrie L.* had been made fast to the pier, Jewett had time and inclination to wreak his saturnine humor on his foe. "Healy, you take Mr. Stuart's bags up to the Clubhouse. Good-by, son—we'll be back for you in a couple o' months."

Stuart shook his hand, laughing. And a tall lanky figure standing near turned a sheeplike, pock-pitted face to observe them. "I'm sick——" snuffled Healy lugubriously.

"You got your mind set on that hospital," said Jewett. "Here—somebody—help Mr.—— Eh? Gone? I'll be dinged! Blamedest rush I ever——"

Stuart indeed had not waited to hear the end of the altercation. He had caught up two of his bags and had given his box of stores into the arms of an idle fellow with stupose hair and a brandied breath, long before the Captain knew he was ready.

THE CLUBHOUSE was a small wooden building, and Haldr, its host, so much too large for it that he could not stand upright in its doorway.

"I am told you speak English," said Stuart, lifting his hat.

"My English no good," said Haldr cheerfully.

"I want some ponies and a guide," Stuart

Digitized by Google

said, coming to the point promptly. "In a hurry. I want to get to Hecla before the irruption is over. Can I start in an hour's time?"

Haldr stared at him. "Get guide tomorrow," he said.

"No, no. At once."

Haldr heavily shook his head.

"I'll pay double," said Stuart. "And I want something to eat first."

"Perhaps," said Haldr, looking dreamily down the street, "I get Oddi." He smiled vacantly. "How many box?"

"Four," said Stuart. "Get Oddi by all means. And hurry him. I'd like to make Krisuvik by dark." The great figure opposite did not shift its pose. "No good," Haldr said dispassionately. "Long road."

"It'll be no shorter till I start," said Stuart impatiently.

Haldr gazed at him meditatively. "Boots?" he said at last.

Stuart thrust forward his foot and the Icelander glanced down at it and shook his head. "No good," he repeated.

"I can ride a pony, man!" said Stuart, half angrily, half laughing.

"Water," said Haldr, and made an eloquent gesture about his middle.

Stuart set down the bags and collected his scattering temper. "Jewett said I'd meet this," he reminded himself, and smiled. "You tell me where to get boots," he said, "and you get Oddi and ponies, and give me something to eat."

"Not time for dinner," said Haldr. He glanced uneasily behind him into the hallway. "When my wife cook—she cook."

"Get me anything!" said Stuart.

He went off at last, irritably, to find the no-good shop where one could get boots, leaving his boxes behind him with an evidently hen-pecked inn-keeper. Jewett had warned him that he would meet with just this sort of heavy procrastination, yet he found himself rather unprepared to endure delay. He wanted desperately to get on to Hecla. He wondered vaguely as he went down the little street, built on a solid foundation of ancient lava, why he attracted so little attention until he remembered that Reykjavik was already invaded by strangers from the yacht in the harbor, but he was nevertheless surprised when on entering the shop he found himself face to face with two Americans.

CHAPTER II

THREE AMERICANS

ONE of the two men was very tall and very thin, with eyes that burned nervously out from under rather wiry gray brows. His hands were never quiet and he had a querulous habit of rubbing his nose impatiently. He was dressed in a loose-hanging fur-lined coat over a gray tweed suit, and his fur cap was pulled over his ears as if he felt the cold.

The other man was short and somewhat misshapen, having a crooked shoulder. His face was swarthy and undeniably ugly, but with an imposing forehead and eyes of immeasurable kindliness, which, when he smiled, as he did at recognizing a compatriot in Stuart, gave an impression of actual beauty.

"Why, I believe we have another American among us," he said pleasantly, as much to his companion as to Stuart. "Have you come in on the fleet from Gloucester, sir?"

Stuart's ready smile was his. "Yes—what a pleasure to meet you. My name is Stuart. I am taking a semi-official trip to Hecla. You are from the yacht that I saw in the harbor, I suppose?"

The man nodded. "My name is Dr. Berwind," he said. He put out a long, delicately constructed hand and gave that of Stuart a hard grip. Instantly and instinctively the two men had taken to each other. Berwind looked over his shoulder at the other man, who had withdrawn a little. "Mr. Lee, may I present my old friend, Mr. Stuart, Government geologist, I believe, whom I have known these last two minutes?" His words were whimsical but his eyes were gravely anxious.

The tall man rubbed his thin nose nervously and nodded a bare recognition. Stuart bowed. "I am in search of boots," said Stuart turning back to Dr. Berwind from the unfriendly silence of the older man. "I understand that I shall have to ford streams."

"And even with boots your legs will freeze," said Berwind cheerfully. "I advise you to kneel on the pony's back if you can. They are such ill-natured little devils that they will pitch you off if they can manage it. I saw one yesterday dash his pack box against a rock and shatter it all to bits, just from cussedness."

Digitized by Google

"Do you know how to ask for boots?" said Stuart, half shyly. "I haven't picked up a word of the tongue yet."

"Certainly—you'll get the way of it very soon. It's remarkably like English at times." The Doctor turned away and consulted with the shopkeeper, while Stuart drew aside a little, watching the other man from the corner of his eye.

He was by no means an ordinary person. There was an air of authority about him that accorded ill with his uncertain manner, and yet one could see that it was the latter he had come to, just as his clothes undeniably witnessed to the wasting of his once large frame. Stuart felt certain that the glancing restlessness of his eyes was made doubly noticeable by the pupil of the iris being extremely constricted in spite of the rather dim light of the shop, giving a dull gray surface almost unrelieved by the usual emphasis of black.

The shopkeeper by this time had brought forth the boots that Stuart was in need of, and the Doctor laughingly held them out himself. "They are not really boots, you see," he said. "Moccasins with long flaps at the ankle would be of as much use to you, but they are better than nothing. There is nothing more significant of the status of a country, my dear Mr. Stuart, than an evidence such as this of how little they revolutionize their inadequate products to suit their needs."

The boots were indeed clumsily made bags, but Stuart, always with his urgent haste in mind, stopped to find no fault with them, but produced his money at once.

"They are mine," he said, "and thank you very much, Dr. Berwind, for your kindness to a stranger. I hope we shall see each other again in our journeys hereabouts." He turned perfunctorily to the other man. "Good day, sir," he said. "Good-by, Dr. Berwind. Thank you again. I am off."

He turned from the shop with the boots dangling under one arm.

HALDR was again at the doorstep when he returned and he moved over and smiled as Stuart drew rapidly near. "A' right," he said. "Oddi will come bring pony, boxes. There is *hangi* and eggs for you, in there on the table." He turned in the doorway and pointed steadfastly at a closed door of the wall. "My wife cook. She begin dinner now. Most cooking—no good." He smiled somewhat fatuously in his appreciation of his fortune. "You go quick," he said, motioning again at the inner door. "Oddi come now." He glanced at the sun. "Make Krisuvik by dark; go quick."

Stuart stooped down to step past him into the house, with the boots on his arm. "It won't take me a minute," he said.

He went quickly down the passage to the door in question, opened it and hurried in. Then he paused in stupefaction. Sitting at the table, leisurely eating his urgently ordered repast and feeding choice bits of *hangi* to a dapper, undershot brindle bull-terrier, was a young woman, an undeniably lovely young woman, who looked up at his entrance with an air of indignant hauteur. Stuart's hand fell from the latch. He saw the lazy, pampered dog lick his teeth over a succulent morsel of his own stewed mutton, and he saw the young woman wipe from her disdainful fingers some crumbs of his own wild-corn bread. Her lifted eyebrows seemed to question his remaining on the threshold of his own luncheon-room another instant.

"Well, really——" said Stuart, with an involuntary helplessness.

It is hard for a man to hold himself with dignity while a pair of yapping dog jaws threaten his ankles, but Stuart attempted it. At any other time he would have yielded the field to the exactions of gallantry, but now time and hunger pressed.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said, "but I believe you are feeding my lunch to this—er——"

The quick blood sprang into her cheeks, and Stuart might have found compensations for his disappointment, in the sight of that rosy face framed by its brown hair and fluffy arrangement of white fur that she wore about her shoulders, were it not for the fact that in the life of every normal man there are moments when the beauty of woman is of less account than the husks that the swine did eat. They were, at any rate, eatable!

"Sir," she said, "I am not in the habit of stealing other people's meals!"

The ridiculous nature of the defense was lost upon them both as they stood enmeshed in a sudden hostility. Then very deliberately she lifted the dish in which there steamed a consummation devoutly wished by him and set it down on the floor. The

Digitized by Google

dog's eager muzzle was deep in it before she drew herself up again to her full height.

Stuart glanced at her in an almost pardonable rage. He was very hungry. "Do not disturb yourself, madam, I beg," he said furiously, and rushed out to grapple with Haldr in the hall. Outside, Oddi was transferring the contents of his boxes to more substantial iron-bound cases. But at the moment the smell of stewed mutton was in Stuart's nostrils, and Hecla could wait. Haldr was impervious to his fury. Evidently the preparations of that one dish, in unscheduled hours, had been a supreme concession. It could not be repeated.

Stuart flung the boots viciously upon the ground. One woman had ruined his day's expedition, another now prevented him from repairing the wreck of it. Though not a woman-hater by nature, he felt himself rapidly drawn toward that extremity. "What chance has a man against them," he said furiously to himself, "even here at the North Pole!"

CHAPTER III

THE SINGING OF A SONG

IT IS INDEED idle talking between a full and a fasting man. Stuart sat down supinely on the door-sill, while Haldr invaded the ring of circling shaggy ponies and gave orders that the cavalcade wait until morning. A man must eat and sleep, though Hecla fail. He continued to sit there, watching his ponies led away, conjuring up exaggerated estimates of what the delay might cost him in his observations and condemning the disagreeable girl within to an early death, when a cheery voice hailed him, and he turned about to find himself again face to face with Berwind and with him Mr. Lee of the ungracious greeting.

"Here's my old friend Mr. Stuart!" his new acquaintance said heartily. "And so, after all, you are waiting a day before you put on those Seven-League Boots and start in fording your streams. Well, well, that is all the better for us. Do you see our American friend, sir?"

To Stuart's surprise, the older man turned to him with a stately and charming courtesy. "I am glad to see you again, Mr. Stuart," he said, "if only to apologize for my recent testiness in the shop below here. But Dr. Berwind will tell you I am much of an invalid—and I have had many worries lately—yes, many worries."

To Stuart's perplexed smile Dr. Berwind offered a ready word of explanation.

"You may have heard we have a patient in the little hospital below here? Our first officer from the yacht. I'm afraid it's only a question of hours for him now, poor chap! He was taken with typhoid——"

"Typhoid—yes, you call it typhoid!" The vehemence of Mr. Lee's interruption subsided suddenly as he turned with a little apologetic air to Stuart.

"As—for my sins—an experienced invalid," he said, "I know by heart the kindly deceits of doctors. Berwind has tried hard to convince me that it was not ship fever that we had on board."

Again the young doctor met Stuart's perplexity with his kind but melancholy smile.

"Our ship below there," he said, "is at this moment no more than a reeking sarcophagus of slaughtered germs. We've been fumigating her, and whether the microbes were those of life's fitful fever or not, the fact remains that after it they sleep well."

"*You* do not sleep in the yacht?" asked Stuart, smiling.

The Doctor laughed. "If you could smell the disinfecting vapor of formaldehyde and sulphur from my floating surgery, which is at present battened down under the hatches of the *Blessed Damozel*, you wouldn't ask that question. No, the men sleep in a tent that they have pitched on the beach, and we came here to the Clubhouse."

HE WATCHED Mr. Lee as he spoke, and followed him with his eyes as that extraordinary individual started suddenly from his gentle mood and hurriedly brushed past them into the house. Berwind looked after him a moment, glanced at Stuart, and smiled. "I must go and speak to our host about his dinner," he said. "It's hard to impose one's own cook on these people!"

Stuart groaned inwardly. "Don't speak of it!" he said to himself, as the Doctor, too, hurried past him. "Dinner—and I've had no luncheon!"

Suddenly the voice of Mr. Lee rang out clearly and the words caught his attention.

"No, I forgot all about it. I remembered afterwards your asking me to speak to Madame Haldr about getting you something

Digitized by Google

to eat, but with the worry of the poor chap in the hospital yonder and all, it went out of my head like that. However, there was no harm done; you had your lunch."

"*Her* lunch!" said Stuart to himself, "She won't be so cocksure, perhaps, another time!" he said to himself with an uncontrollable amusement, as her father's tones relapsed into a sudden testiness.

"Very well, but you ate the lunch! Therefore it's your lunch now and finally. What does it matter whose lunch it was in the beginning?"

"If I'm not mistaken," said Stuart to himself, "it will matter to her!" And he wondered why it straightway began to matter less to him. He continued to sit there on the step, half angry and half amused, while the low-lying sun swung slowly about the horizon from the blue sea to the black hills. The old tower in the west loomed roughly against the evening sky.

After an interval, during which he watched the infrequent passers with a hostile eye, among them an occasional couple of white-clad sailors from the yacht, he saw the trim figure of a young woman approaching him. As she passed one of these sailors, a tall blond Swede, she called out pleasantly in a soft Irish voice: "Hello, Svenson, feel more at home here? These folks look like blood relations of yours!"

The man nodded gloomily. And Stuart noticed that, like himself, he was staring at the ruined tower on the hill and evincing in his stolid face less interest than disfavor. There was certainly a story to be got out of somebody about that tower, he thought, and he would get it if he could.

The young woman, making no comment upon the sailor's lack of response, came on toward Stuart, and he was obliged, for reasons not unconnected with the size of the doorway, to rise when he saw that unmistakably it was her intention to enter the Clubhouse. She was evidently a servant, a pretty Irish girl, probably the maid to that insufferable wench within.

He could not help thinking that the mistress might take a lesson in pretty courtesy from her servant, as the girl bent her head in acknowledgment as she passed him. She had some parcels in her hand, and he was aware as he reseated himself that she stopped inside to unwrap them, perhaps the better to observe this unexpected recruit to the invading American force.

As she busied herself, or pretended to, with this task, she began singing softly to herself. And Stuart listened, since her voice was quite pleasing and the song a pretty one, quite unaware that Destiny was at the moment running over for his benefit the *leit-motif* of the whole future performance.

"Down she came as white as milk,
A rose in her bosom as soft as silk——"

sang the girl in an undertone. Then she hummed a bar or two, and then with a drop into a simple minor she sang again:

"Far, far away I left my love asleeping,
Sleeping far away beside the windy sea,
Where the endless billows roar
On the melancholy shore:
But they'll never wake my Rose Marie,
(My Rose!)
But they'll never wake my Rose Marie."

It was a quaint sailor sort of chauntey, and Stuart would have been glad to hear her repeat it. But at the moment of her finishing it, he heard the door of the fatal room open and a voice he recognized, although it was speaking far more gently than it had spoken to him, called the girl by name.

"Katie!"

"Yes, Miss Nora," replied the maid. Her singing was at an end.

CHAPTER IV

THE CURSE OF THE OLAFSENS

SO again alone, unentertained and hungry, his attention reverted to the street, and he saw that at some distance the big Swede Svenson had stopped with the host of the Clubhouse himself, and that Olavur Haldr was talking with him, it would seem apprehensively, casting wary glances now and then about him. He remembered Captain Jewett's saying that he had found a strange reticence among these people on the subject of that very tower that Svenson seemed to regard with such aversion, and he wondered whether they were talking of it now in those furtive hushed words. He had half a mind to stroll down and join them, and was wondering whether his presence would put an end to these confidences or whether he might hope to get the mysterious story, when Mr. Lee and Dr. Berwind came out of the house behind him. As Stuart rose again to let them pass, Mr.

Digitized by Google

Lee turned to him abruptly, and oddly enough began on the very subject that was engrossing him.

"Mr. Stuart, Berwind tells me you are a Government geologist. I don't know what that is, but I would like to be told about that tower on the hill. It's very much taller than the thing at Newport, but the plan is the same."

"I'm sorry," said Stuart. "I haven't asked."

"Asked!" echoed Mr. Lee. "Asked! Nobody will speak of the thing, apparently. They call it Olaf's—Viking, Iceland, Metropolitan opera!"

Berwind came over his irritation as oil spreads on water. "Mr. Lee is an archeolgist," he said gently. "It's very hard to be rebuffed by ignorance." He turned as Haldr came slowly toward them. "I'll ask him," he said.

Stuart listened to the unintelligible question and saw the man's face color and then fade from brick-red to the mottles of a sickly brown. And then Mr. Lee's thin, dreadful hand closed down upon his arm, and a whisper buzzed in his ear. "What is it?" said Mr. Lee. "What are they hiding?"

The ever watchful Berwind turned as Mr. Lee's voice twanged nervously. And he left Haldr abruptly. "He says there's an Olafsen in the tower — there's evidently nothing more to it than an indigenous legend of buried treasure. At least that was all I could make out—they don't seem to care to talk about it."

"Buried treasure!" cried Stuart, his face gleaming. The golden words hung in the air about them. "Buried treasure—and a mystery—and an old tower! And you take it like that!"

Even Mr. Lee seemed to light up in the glow of Stuart's boyish enthusiasm. But he rubbed his nose irritably for all that. "If they *won't* tell," he said, "and we can't understand what they *do* say——"

"I've got it," said Stuart. "We'll ask Haldr's wife. She's a German woman. Probably she can talk about it fearlessly and we can understand her at any rate."

"You can't see her now," smiled Berwind. "The solemn ritual of cooking is occupying Madame Haldr. But we'll ask her later."

The delay seemed to quash Mr. Lee's vague interest. He stood looking down the street. "Are you going down to the hospital again, Berwind?"

"Yes."

"Will the man die?"

"Perhaps," said Berwind simply. "By the way, Mr. Stuart, we have a friend of yours at the hospital—a man named Healy."

"Not seriously ill, I'll wager!" laughed Stuart.

Mr. Lee and the Doctor received this in silence, and Stuart found the pause an awkward one. Then the older man asked somewhat coldly, "You know the man?"

Stuart flushed quickly. "I am sorry to have inferred that I do," he said with some dignity. "He struck me as unprepossessing. I certainly know nothing to his discredit, on the other hand."

"You see," said Berwind, "he has once commanded a ship of his own, and—we may need a mate."

Stuart nodded, in sympathetic silence.

MADAME HALDR came to them after dinner in response to a respectful message.

"Oh, yes—the tower," she said. "*Ach, Gott*, how good it is to be speaking in a Christian tongue again!" Her calm eyes behind her spectacles beamed upon her guests.

She sat down beside Nora. "It is strange that you should ask me about the tower to-night—for to-night a strange thing has happened. To-night for the first time in all the years I have lived here, the bell in the tower has not rung at Vesper time. I have listened for the bell every night," and she showed her wooden rosary at her side.

"This Olafsen—then——" began Berwind.

Madame Haldr nodded. "There was a curse upon those Olafsens. Perhaps"—her voice was subdued—"perhaps the curse is over now."

"A curse, too!" Stuart fairly rolled the morsel on his tongue. But Berwind found it little to his taste. "If you mean the man in the tower may be dead, it is our duty surely——"

Madame Haldr turned to him half somberly. "The man may be dead," she answered, "but the curse also may be lifted."

Berwind stared at her. "Do you believe in this curse, too, madam?"

"I don't know," she answered slowly; "in other days I should have said no, perhaps. But here in a land where the sun shines at midnight and is black at noon-day,

Digitized by Google

one is not quite so certain after all. For what all men about you believe with their whole hearts, and have believed for all the centuries before you were born, who can say so lightly after all that it is nothing but prejudice and fear? For what they fear—who can tell?—it may after all be the truth of God Himself."

She ceased with a long sigh. "If he be really dead," she added as though to herself, "is it not strange to think that I shall be the one person in the land who will not be glad with the whole heart?"

Mark was quick to take advantage of this unguarded opening. "But, madame," he asked, "how can they be glad or sorry on a subject of which, to a man, they profess utter and entire ignorance?"

In a moment the ghost of a smile hovered over Madame Haldr's thin lips. Then, shaking her head: "They know," she said.

"Then why, in heaven's name," said Mr. Lee with his habitual irritation, "do they refuse point-blank to tell?"

"They are afraid," she said. It had become apparent to Berwind, if not to the others, that the woman was not wholly free of fear herself.

"Afraid of what?" asked Nora Lee softly.

"They say there is a curse on the one who speaks of it, as there is upon the treasure itself, and upon him who covets it," replied Madame Haldr, and her finger-tips touched her beads. "But why should I not tell you—you who speak to me in the dear tongue of the Fatherland? Living in this land is my curse, and you great people would never be so foolish as to desire the forbidden gold."

"Then there really is a treasure?" said Berwind with sudden interest.

Madame Haldr answered with obvious pride. "Treasure, *ach, meine Herren!* all the riches, or so they say, of the richest monastery of Europe—the Abbey of the Archangel Michael." She stopped to cross herself. "It was founded in Sicily, they say, by Charlemagne himself, and furnished with the treasures of his three kingdoms. The crucifixes, *meine Herren*, the priceless images, the golden chalices——"

Stuart drew a long breath. Mr. Lee moved in nervous excitement. "Golden chalices? Good heavens, woman, and chalices are one of my specialties! But what in the name of all mystery brought them up here to the North Pole?"

"What were they, *mein Herr*, who raked the seas for treasure to carry home to the North?" retorted the woman.

Stuart's fancy flew back to the conversation of the afternoon. "The Vikings?" he asked.

She nodded her head. "The sea-rovers of Norway—you are right! When they came to Palermo and drew their keels up on the beach, they left nothing but death behind them. The monks of the Archangel were killed at their prayers. The Abbot, they say, was butchered with their broadswords as he prayed before the altar. The sacristan was murdered with his hands on the bell-rope as he rang the alarm that might bring them aid from the town—the same bell, my friends," she added impressively, "which now hangs in that tower on the hill above there.

"THEY say that the Abbot, as he lay bleeding to death on his altar steps, raised himself for a moment to call down the vengeance of Heaven upon these robbers and murderers who before his dying eyes were despoiling the sanctuary. You know that terrible psalm which stirs the hair in the skin only to hear the priest read it in church on Sundays? In the words of this cursing psalm, they say, the dying Abbot laid the ban of God on each one that should so much as lay finger upon the treasure, from that time forth and forever more. 'Set then a wicked man over him,'" she quoted, "'and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his very prayer become sin. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his habitation become desolate and let his children be continually vagabonds and beg——'"

The low monotonous tones stopped suddenly short. "No," she said with a little laugh that quavered in her breath, "I am foolish, I know, but I really do not like even to say it. For what makes it so fearful is that it comes from the Bible and that it is true."

"Tut, tut, nonsense!" cried Mr. Lee. "You mean to tell me that it did come true?"

Madame Haldr nodded impressively. "It came true," she said, "every word! The Vikings left the ruined Abbey and the dead

Digitized by Google

men behind them, and came north with their ship stuffed with gold to the hatches. But the winds drove them from their course. They were swept westward to Iceland. The storms drove them on the evils of the southeastern headlands, below the High-Gonè Hills——"

"On the edge of the Vatna desert?" asked Stuart.

Madame Haldr nodded. "The great Vatna Desert, yes. But here, *mein Herr*, is something that all your science can not explain—*it was not a desert then!*"

CHAPTER V

THE CURSE OF THE VATNA JÖKULL

AT THIS touch upon matters, for him, professional, Stuart broke in with quickened interest. "Then so far," he said, "the old tale agrees with the verdict of the scientists. The glaciers which now cover the Vatna have been formed, they tell us, within the last thousand years."

Madame Haldr's pale lips smiled in a faint superiority. "You with your books, Herr Philosopher, can tell us perhaps that the Vatna is now a desert waste, a hungry, crawling monster of ice, which year by year is creeping on—creeping on to blast and devour the whole land. But why? Can your science answer me that—why?"

Stuart shook his head with a reluctant smile. "You are right, madam. This is a matter where science hobbles very lame indeed." Turning to the others he went on: "You may have heard, sir,—you may know, Berwind, this Vatna Jökull as they call it, is one of the unsolved mysteries of geology. It is plainly at the bottom of the unexplained change of climate which has reduced Iceland from the prosperous kingdom of a thousand years ago to the little arctic settlement of to-day. And the peculiar horror of the business is, as Madame Haldr tells us, that these vast glacial fields are perceptibly enlarging year by year; so that there seems no reason to doubt that in another thousand years or so they will have completely buried the island."

In spite of her affected scepticism, a slight stricture passed over the thin face of the German woman. "That is what every Icelander dreads—and knows," she answered in a low voice. "But the reason, *mein Herr*, the reason?"

Again Stuart shook his head. "The case is a reversal of nature. It is without precedent or parallel—I have no opinion to offer."

Madame Haldr leaned toward him from the pale shadows. "So you own that I speak the truth when I tell you that in the old days this desert of ice was known as the Garden of the Vatna! The old days tell of the warm current that washed its coast, of its vines and its wheat-fields and of the roses that bloomed in its hedgerows in June. And over all this beautiful and fertile country Olaf was Lord."

"Olaf? The ancestor of the Olafsen in the tower yonder?"

Madame Haldr nodded. "Yes, and the overlord of a province coveted by all Iceland, till the day came when the Viking ship was dashed ashore on the rocks below his castle. Now here, *meine Herren*, mark the finger of Providence! It was high tide when the vessel sank—when the tide fell, there she was on the beach, with her hull filled with water, and treasure and dead men. But of all the crew of pirates, we know that only two living beings survived to come ashore."

Miss Lee leaned forward, her hazel eyes large with the interest. "And Sir Olaf found them then, the treasures, and the two men?"

"Two men? Did I say two men, *mein Fräulein?* It was the chief of the Viking ship who lived through that storm alone,—with his monkey! Alone on the beach with his monkey on his shoulder, Sir Olaf found him. Alive, yes! But the curse of the dying Abbot had fallen on him—he was mad, *meine Herren!* mad with grief and repentance and horror of the judgment that had fallen on his companions and himself.

"PICTURE to yourself how he must have looked, ragged and raving, with the little imp of a monkey on his shoulder playing with its golden bracelets—for they say the tiny creature had one on every limb. He told Olaf of the treasure, he warned him it was not for human hands. And Olaf made him welcome and took him home. That night as he slept, Olaf and his sons strangled him in his bed, and the little monkey ran crying and screaming about the house till it was killed, too. They buried the two bodies together, they say, in the deepest ravine. And danced near the grave, the boys did, because the great treasure was to be theirs."

Digitized by Google

Mr. Lee looked up. "But the treasure, what did they do with that?"

"They must have hoarded it a while," said Madame Haldr, "and then, as misfortune after misfortune visited their homes, they became fearful of the curse they had ignored. It is said they buried it where the murdered man was buried. But what good did it do them? What use was it, this tardy reparation? The Olafsens could give up the treasure, yes! But the curse was never lifted from them and their land.

"The dead volcanoes around them woke to life and poured down lava on their farms and vineyards; the ice came down the valleys. As the Abbot had prayed, their habitations were made desolate! The years went by. Further and further they were driven from their homes. Through all the years Satan stood on their right hand. They came to Holy Church for shelter; generation after generation they fasted and prayed; they tolled the silver bell of the Archangel for matins and for vespers. Even after the heretics had seized the island and driven out the true faith, the Olafsens were ever faithful. Driven out at last by the unholy cold, from their own land, they crossed the High-Gone-Hills and came here to build this tower above Reykjavik. They were a melancholy race, marked like Cain, fated always to failure and to incredible misfortunes. But every night, through the centuries, the prayers of the Church were said and the bell was tolled—until to-night, perhaps at last, the ancient race of Olafsen has come to an end."

"But this present Olafsen—then he was more of a failure even than his forebears?" inquired Berwind curiously, "since they at least left sons behind them always to toll their bell!"

It was plain to the others, though Berwind gave no sign of noticing it, that it was with an added gentleness she answered him. Womanlike she had felt that to himself he sometimes exaggerated his crookedness and in speaking of another's deformity she feared to touch upon a subject that would cause him to wince. "He is a dwarf, Herr Doctor, with a great hump like Polichinelle. An unpopular man and a secret curse, that is enough for a woman to marry, but physical horror—no."

"But if it is known," said Stuart in perplexity, "that the survivor brought the treasure safely ashore, has no one tried——"

Madame Haldr nodded her head. "If you find that odd, *mein Herr?* So did I, when first I came here and heard the first whisper of this tale! But wait till the long Summer nights when the sun dogs you like remorse; wait till the Winter days when no dawn breaks and the voice of that bell comes down to you on the wind—and then, see if you envy the Olafsens the burden that they have borne in their souls for so many, many years! 'Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to harbor his fatherless children.'

"It has come true once; would any one risk that, for him and his children, it should come true again?"

For a moment there was silence in the shadowy room, then Mr. Lee asked curiously:

"But at least it is known they left the treasure behind them in the Vatna?"

Madame Haldr nodded. "There it lies, and there it will lie till the Judgment Day, blasting the wilderness around it. How wide that wilderness is no one knows, for, in the memory of man, no one has crossed it alive. Men have tried to cross it—yes, again and again they have tried it; for it is said that the sulphur springs, if one could reach them, would yield a fortune. My husband's brother once tried it, but at the Gates of the Bursting-Sands, his heart failed him and he turned back. It was death-in-life he said—the great mountains, the High-Gone-Hills, with their columns of flameless fire; the deserts of snow between them, the black stormy seas of lava with the dead craters and twisted fantastic shapes, like the world before God spoke on the first day and said 'Let there be light' or like the surface of the moon——"

"The surface of the moon," echoed Stuart dreamily.

IN THE passage without, a door clattered open, and Haldr came forward into the group. His wife rose and passed him quietly, but he gazed after her as if in some dull suspicion. He turned to Berwind, as if it was the Doctor he had come to see.

"What time you go?" he asked, in spite of his choppy English, not unkindly.

"We will sleep here," said Berwind, and Haldr flung up his hands.

"No room!" he said. "You not sleep on boat?"

Digitized by Google

"No," said Berwind. Instinctively he adopted Haldr's telegraphic style.

"I have one room," said Haldr simply. "I have one house."

Nora suddenly laughed, but her face speedily darkened at the innkeeper's next remark. "One room I give him," he said, pointing like a child at Stuart, "but now come lady. She take room."

Stuart turned to her smiling. A man can afford to be cheerful in the hour of his revenge even though he can not be generous. "You can not refuse to be in my debt," he said.

She colored angrily. "I should prefer anything else."

"Of course you would." He was not at all cast down by her expression of a feeling he knew to be genuine. "That is just what makes it all so complete."

He came to a stand near her, smiling down at her in a triumphant way that irritated her beyond all expression. But she made a brave show of self-possession, turning haughtily from him as she again faced the Doctor. "I suppose," she said, apparently to Berwind, "that I shall have to take it."

Berwind was looking first at one and then the other in some mystification. It was but natural that a gentleman should smilingly resign his comfort to the needs of a lady and that she should accept the sacrifice with some show of reluctance, but they had a way of doing it, these two, that puzzled him.

"Take it, yes," assented Berwind. "But what about you, Stuart? And Mr. Lee? You must forgive me if I am most concerned about him. His sleep is very—er—are there no neighbors who could take us in?"

Haldr shook his head. "You will sleep in the church," he said simply.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

"THE church!" Their three voices rose together in three tones of incredulity. The sound aroused Mr. Lee from the self-absorption into which he had fallen. He turned nervously. "What is the matter? More of this wretched spooky business?" He came toward them, his eyebrows twitching upward, and Stuart found time even in this well-occupied moment to wonder at the swift changes of this man's bearing.

"What does he mean by 'sleeping in the church?'" demanded Mr. Lee irritably.

Haldr drew down the corners of his mouth and raised his brows. "It is the custom here!" he said, stretching forth his chin in a grimace of deprecation.

"Yes, it has been known to happen elsewhere, as well, my dear man," laughed Stuart.

Haldr stared at him for answer.

"Do you mean to say," testily Mr. Lee broke in, "that it is customary to use the church in this town as a lodging-house?"

Haldr nodded again. "Many have slept there," he affirmed drowsily. "Oddi will go with you."

"Well, upon my word!" said Berwind flatly. The three men stared at one another.

Nora went softly to her father's side and locked her arm in his. "Dear," she said almost in a whisper, "please take my little room. They can find some corner to put me in. You must not consider this nonsensical idea of sleeping in the church! It would make you ill. You let Haldr show you up to the little room, and then we will see what we can do for the rest of us."

It was a shock to Stuart to see the man fling the girl's arm roughly from him. "Heavens, Nora, how can you put me in such a position! What sort of a sniveling old fool do you think I am? The idea of suggesting such a thing! Do you think I am not as good as the next man? A little roughing it is delightful. A new experience. Nonsense! I shall certainly sleep in the church, Berwind."

Berwind gave a quick glance at him, and was silent. The girl Nora had remained close at her father's side, Stuart felt sure, to cloak as much as possible from him the man's rude repulse of her gentle offer. He looked from the doctor to the patient, and to the daughter. The vague suspicion that the man was mentally unbalanced returned to him. What a life, if that were true, lay ahead of the poor girl! In any event, what a life lay about her now! He saw her eyes upon her father's face, loving and patient, only distressed that he should show himself before strangers to such disadvantage. He felt suddenly very sorry that he had added one straw to her burden.

"Well, that settles it, doesn't it?" said Mr. Lee abruptly. "Get some one to come

Digitized by Google

along and show us the way and bring the bedding, Haldr. The sooner we turn in, the better." Haldr willingly disappeared.

The girl turned obediently on her father's shoulder, holding up her face to his. "Good-night, dear," she said. He bent and kissed her on the cheek fondly. "Good-night, my child," he answered.

Stuart saw, although he knew he ought not to be looking at them in that instant, that the girl clung to him almost eagerly as she caught the note of tenderness in his voice. Her eyes seemed to devour his face with a passionate anxiety of hope. "I hope, dear, you will sleep well in your church," she said, trying to speak lightly. "You do sleep well in this air, don't you? You find this air agrees with you?" Try as she might she could not keep the heart-breaking falter from her voice, but the man himself did not notice it. It was Stuart, who, glancing from them to Berwind, saw the Doctor turn miserably away, biting his lips.

IT WAS an interesting episode in his one night's stay in Reykjavik, meeting these people and studying them. And it was curious that during all the hours they had been together not until the present moment had it occurred to him that Berwind was hopelessly in love with the daughter of his peculiar patient. Was it because the fellow was so indescribably ugly that one would never think of him in any connection with the most beautiful of all emotions?

Nora, after giving her hand to Berwind with a grateful pressure, bowed without speaking to Stuart, and went out. And Stuart on an unreasoned impulse followed her out into the hall. The realization of the sadness of the girl's lot which had come to him only a few minutes earlier had brought with it a regret for his own tormenting her, and without having decided in the least what he would say to her, he felt impelled to clear himself in her eyes as far as might be of any suspicion of unpleasant intention regarding the future.

She turned slowly, as she stood in the hall waiting for Haldr's wife, when he spoke to her. "Have you come to urge my humiliation any farther?" she said, as she saw his face. It was an odd word, so it struck Stuart, used by this young woman with her chin in the air and her eyes repellent with disdain. But the manner of her speaking was not going to deter him from making a clean breast of the matter; he was determined upon that in any event.

"I came out to speak to you—to say that I regret having made you feel toward me as you do," he said bravely.

"I can not see that it makes a particle of difference how we feel toward each other," said Nora coldly.

"Well, I can," he retorted, unruffled. "Because it does make a difference to me. I have seemed rude and unpleasant to you."

"I have not bestowed one thought upon your peculiar nature," she said. "Pray dismiss the matter."

"But I want to make amends; I have annoyed you——"

"You are giving yourself undue importance," she interrupted, turning still farther from him.

"Oh, but you are human enough to be annoyed by another human, I am sure. In the matter of this room, now——"

She turned upon him quite unexpectedly. Her face was very white. "Mr. Stuart," she said, with a concentration of contempt in the very way she spoke his name, "you are needlessly prolonging a conversation that is most distasteful to me. If you are in the least degree honest in saying that you wish to make amends for your past behavior, you can show that willingness by leaving me at once. You have urged a most ungentlemanly advantage upon me, and that is the end of the matter. As you will be going away early to-morrow, we shall not be put to the unpleasant necessity of meeting again. I bid you good-by." With a curt nod, she walked away from him, and stood at some distance looking with blind eyes at a worthless print of gaudy fuchias hanging near the door. She was conscious that he had not moved from where she left him.

A long intolerable minute went by, during which she stood there pretending to be absorbed in the wretched chromo. Then he spoke to her.

"I take it, Miss Lee, that you do not wish to meet me half way in this by apologizing for your bad behavior to me?" he asked quietly. The question fairly took her off her feet, but she gave no sign that she had heard him speak.

He waited an instant. "Your silence, of course, is my answer. Under the circum-

Digitized by Google

stances, I can only rejoice with you that in all probability we shall not meet again."

She heard him move away then, and saw from the very end of her eyes that he had gone back to the others and closed the door.

CHAPTER VII

THE LITTLE OLD MAN IN THE CHURCH

THE church was a dingy, dilapidated structure standing in an otherwise vacant square, a long, low, barnlike building, flanked on either side by two turf walls. The interior was dismal in the extreme, so far as could be seen by the insufficient light of the lantern.

It amused Berwind to explore the place a little. "I wonder what spirit painted those blue rails around the altar," he said laughing. "What's above there, Oddi?" He pointed upward where part of the church roof was floored, repeating his question in rude Icelandic.

The man's reply set him to laughing again. "He says the farmers store a lot of stuff up there. I tell you, Mr. Lee, this church has to work week-days as well as Sundays. Now, let us see where we shall camp."

"Oddi has already determined on that," said Stuart, coming toward them from the shadows. "You are right in saying the church works every day—over there are hanging rows of men's and women's clothes! The place is a store-house for all their treasure, material as well as spiritual. And if those two little windows flanking the door are, as they appear to be, the only means of ventilation in the place, I should say it would also be an invaluable repository for bad air and germs. I do like to be a cheering influence! By the way, this Oddi is a little thing, but my own. If there is anything he can do for you, pray don't hesitate to call on him. I have made him understand that he is to remain with us all night. At least I think I have. You might tell him again, Berwind, for your Icelandic is very good. I can almost understand it myself."

"That's very good of you," said Berwind. "Let's have a look at our sleeping arrangements."

It was evident to the Doctor on inspection that the thick-headed Icelander had had some assistance in arranging the dormitory, for Stuart's sleeping-bag was disposed at some distance from the others, leaving the invalid and his physician in as great a privacy as possible. They were together bemoaning the lack of ventilation in the place and commenting on the notion of camping down in the shadows of the blue-painted altar when Mr. Lee joined them.

"Great heavens, Berwind," he was complaining, "one would think you had forgotten my existence! Do you know that it is several minutes past the hour for my medicine?"

Stuart settled himself in his corner, finding that there are worse beds than a sleeping-bag, and, being a healthy young animal, would probably have slept soundly in these strange quarters, had he not been disturbed a little after midnight by Oddi himself. He woke to find the man bending over him with a rousing, if respectful, hand on his shoulder. Stuart was sleepily aware of several presences in the church near the door.

"Go to thunder!" said Stuart genially. "What is it—more boarders? Don't bother me. Get out!"

"*Ecki god*," said Oddi, with a long face.

"What the dickens do you mean by that?" growled Stuart, rolling over. "I don't know what you want. Wait till morning."

Berwind's voice called quietly across the intervening darkness. "What's up, Stuart? Thought you promised to 'rap on the wall.'"

Oddi rose from his stooping posture and addressed the invisible Doctor at some length. Stuart listened, sleepily. "What is he saying, Berwind?"

"Can't make it all out," retorted the other. "Somebody's got the small-pox, I think, and wants medicine. But I have nothing of that sort here. Everything is on the yacht. Tell them that I'll see about it to-morrow, Oddi," he concluded in very lame Icelandic, all the more halting for the yawn in which it began and terminated.

Oddi growled something in reply, and Berwind laughed. "He says he is going to put them in a pail of water, Stuart," he said. "Hey, Oddi, that won't do them any good. I'll see about it in the morning. Can't do anything now. Don't bother us."

Stuart rolled over again, looking for a comfortable posture.

"I hope he hasn't disturbed Mr. Lee," he said in a smothered tone from the depths of his blankets.

"Oh, no danger of that now," said Ber-

Digitized by Google

wind. "Mr. Lee is sleeping very soundly. Good-night to you, again."

AFTER that the night passed quietly and so quickly that Stuart felt he was continuing the same conversation when in the light of morning he found himself staring up into the face of Dr. Berwind.

"Look here, old man," Berwind was saying, "have you been vaccinated?"

"Huh?" The inelegant monosyllable was expressive of Stuart's amazement.

"Vaccinated," repeated the Doctor, speaking with more insistence as one must to a sleepy intelligence.

Stuart sat up, staring into Berwind's face. "What's the matter? Vaccinated—why yes, when I was a little chap."

"Not since?"

"No. You're not a crank on the subject, are you? By ginger, if you have waked me out of a sound sleep to practise the theory of medicine on me, Berwind, you will die a wiser man at least."

Berwind's gravity was not dispelled by this genial threat. "I dare say you are all right," he said dubiously. "You see, I made the cheerful discovery a few minutes ago of what Oddi was pestering about last night. There is a nice old gentleman who died of smallpox yesterday lying in state near us here in the church! Did you ever hear of anything like these people and their customs?

Stuart wriggled himself free of his encumbering bedding. "Great Caesar's ghost!" he said helpfully.

Berwind's face relaxed into a faint smile as he looked back across the church. "You remember the pail of water," he said, "don't you? That goose of an Oddi has set all the waterpails of the church here in a circle around the coffin, laboring apparently on the theory that germs are not valiant navigators."

"There's a picturesque notion of sanitary precaution!" said Stuart, struggling into his clothes.

"Is that the old gentleman's coffin down there on the backs of the seats?"

"Yes. I thought at first it was a child's coffin, it was so small. But when I examined the matter I found my mistake. It is a little old man, a dwarf."

Stuart fairly jumped around to face him. "Not *our* dwarf?" he asked excitedly, with an accent on the possessive pronoun. "Has he a hump? It can't be the Olafsen Hunchback?"

"Why, probably the very man!" agreed Berwind. "I had not thought of it. Curious, too, that we should get the last chapter of the story so promptly after the first."

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE VIKING TOWER

STUART started away from him interestedly. "I tell you this business interests me, Berwind. Where's Oddi? I want to go up to that tower. I can't get the lure of that Vatna Jökull out of my head. Fancy a spot on the surface of the earth like that of the moon! Suppose it really is spreading slowly, as they say it is? Suppose it should prove to be the beginning of the end? There's a big geographical story in this thing, old man. And what a remarkable notion of the devastation being due to that legendary treasure! Doesn't it take hold of you? There may be more to be found about it up there where this family hid its secret for so many centuries!"

"You are a romantic fool, Stuart, aren't you?" said Berwind. "I'll tell you what does get hold of me, and that is that the tower ought to be disinfected or this little place may witness a plague that would indeed be the beginning of its end."

Stuart welcomed the notion enthusiastically. "Let us go up, by all means. I'll hunt for the things a romantic fool could care about and you can hunt for the dear little fuzzy germs in which a scientific ass takes such an interest. There's Oddi now. Send him for your stuff and let's go up."

Berwind shook his head. "I have to get the 'stuff' myself. Besides, we have had no breakfast." He turned, as if to set out for the inn. But Stuart did not move to join him.

"Bring me some biscuits in your pocket," he said, eying the road. "I'm not going to the house to breakfast." He spoke with a poor indifference. "Join me in the Viking's cell, 'sdeath! I'll have a look around before you begin to make things hideous. Hey, Oddi!"

"Have it your own way," said Berwind, with a shrug. "I wouldn't go to heaven without my breakfast."

Oddi joined his master as the Doctor

Digitized by Google

moved off briskly up the street, and Stuart began a series of monosyllabic words in explanation of his wants. Oddi looked up at the tower, and looked away, and surreptitiously made the sign of the cross under his jacket.

Just from the desire to know how great was the native fear of the place, Stuart pulled out some money and held it toward him, pointing up toward the tower with the other hand. It was evident the simple Icelander had never seen so much money at once in all his life, for he looked at it with something like incredulity in his staring eyes. Yet he drew away from it. Stuart laughed and left him.

The mountain was steep, yet rounded at the top, the surface of the trachytic rock having been subjected to the eroding and polishing forces of the ice in the glacial period. But so intent was Stuart on gaining the tower that he halted for no geological investigations whatsoever.

It was when he had nearly reached the goal that he found himself suddenly confronting a middle-aged gentleman of most apparent self-importance, who had been watching him, it would seem, for some time with undisguised displeasure. Stuart, taking in at a glance the portly importance of the person in the dark wadmol garments, halted and lifted his cap. The portly gentleman acknowledged the salutation by a slight bend of the neck, perhaps indeed, as Stuart mused upon it, the only part of him he could bend at all. And he said something coldly in Icelandic.

"I am sorry," said Stuart, "I don't understand. I am an American."

"I am the sysleman of Reykjavik," said the portly gentleman in a stilted effort to make his English impressive. "I speak your tongue."

"Ah, now, how very fortunate!" said Stuart pleasantly. And waited.

"You are not going up to the tower?"

"I thought of doing so."

"There is nothing there."

Stuart nodded. "I suppose not. There must be a beautiful view, however. And the physician from the yacht is going to join me in a little while, to disinfect the place."

The sysleman raised his eyebrows tolerantly. "He may be permitted to do that if he wishes. May I ask your business, sir?"

"I am United States Government Geologist," said Stuart impressively.

The words had an effect at once. The sysleman smiled and nodded. Just what the impression upon his mind had been, Stuart could not say. But he cared little, so long as it resulted as it did, in the removal of the portly body from his path. After a few more politely indefinite remarks, Stuart lifted his cap again, passing onward. As he looked back he saw that the sysleman was continuing his slow descent of the mountain.

THE tower was indeed, as they had remarked, very like the well known pile at Newport, except in the matter of height, where it far excelled the American mystery. Moreover, the roof was still intact, and there above in a sort of belfry hung the bell whose silence had announced to the village below the death of its venerable warder. The interior of the place was crude enough. Scattered about in the large circle of the walls were some fragmentary pieces of rude furniture, of which Stuart foresaw that Berwind would presently make a bonfire.

It was a disappointment to Stuart, this place. He had hoped for something worth investigating, perhaps some books and manuscripts which might have a bearing upon the matter that was engrossing so many of his thoughts. He stood in the place, turning about and about. He went carefully over the earthen floor, looking with eyes of trained keenness for some trace of disturbance, but the solid earth had been trodden for generations into the consistency of iron-clad plate. The bed, immediately beneath the bell, was a negligible mass of blankety material. He was quite certain the sysleman had been turning it over with the point of his stick in a wary search for possibly valuable relics. The rest of the furnishing was incapable of concealing anything, not even its own decrepitude.

Distinctly disappointed at the collapse of all his hopes of romantic trove and disgusted somewhat by a first sense of being breakfastless, Stuart wandered out again into the sunlight. All about the tower lay the rude blocks of turf that in the colder weather would have been replaced in the open arches of the walls. Sitting on one of these piles, he pulled out his pipe and filled it. When the smoke curled upward in the still morning air, he settled himself more comfortably, looking back along the trail to the little town, waiting to recognize the figure of Berwind, who would come bearing biscuits.

Digitized by Google

Biscuits! If it had not been for that girl he would have gone to the inn for a comfortable breakfast. The thought that Madame Haldr was a German woman and probably made the most delicious coffee was almost bitter enough to fling him writhing to the ground.

He saw Berwind at last, a toy figure in the distance, and waited patiently. At least Nora Lee could not flatter herself that he cared to see her again!

It was a picturesque mass, the tower. He wondered if it really was a first cousin to the pile at Newport. What an odd little playground the world was, after all, with the broken toys lying about just as the tired children had left them!

What a power, too, were one's individual convictions. Fancy these people having rung that bell at a certain hour every night as far back as—the—memory—of—

His mind mechanically went on with the words, even though his attention had suddenly left them. With the pipe at a little distance from his mouth, held rigidly, he halted. Then he slowly sat up. The pipe fell from his fingers. He jumped to his feet, tearing off his coat. Then he stooped and wrenched loose the fastenings of his shoes, flinging them down beside his other belongings.

At two jumps he was inside the tower again, tightening his belt a bit as he ran. With one speculative glance upward, he spat boyishly on his hands and with a spring caught hold of the projecting top of one of the arches. Slowly he drew himself upward to his knees until his one hand reached still higher, caught at a stone and helped him to his feet. Already the perspiration had started from his forehead.

"I'm rotten soft!" he said contemptuously. He took a long breath and another look upward. Before him, at the very end of his nose, rose the ragged wall of the tower.

His fingers crept round the projections, all his strength seeming concentrated in the tips of them.

It went much more slowly than he had hoped and his arms and hands and fingers and the back of his neck began to ache hideously.

From stone to stone he worked his painful way upward. The builders, thank heaven, had not deemed it necessary to trim a rock in the placing of it. Great ledges stuck out, and knobs that he could gratefully depend upon, and crevices showed here and there where a man could put his whole foot.

SO TENSE had the silence become that he was suddenly aware of the breathing of two men in the space below him. He recognized the sound little by little and it did not startle him. Berwind had come, with his companion. It was amusingly evident that Berwind was afraid to call out to him.

But he was not going to waste his precious breath in any reassurance. Slowly he toiled his hard way upward, now far above them in the belfry.

It had seemed a long while to him that he had been climbing, yet even he would have been amazed to know he had been struggling in his perilous course for nearly half an hour. At last his hand touched the great log that lay across the belfry, touched it and surmounted it. He lay across it, panting in hurtful gasps for breath.

Down below he saw the two faces looking upward, motionless. But he was too weary so much as to wave a hand to them.

After a little he flung one leg weakly over the log and began slowly to make his way outward toward the bell.

It was the thick of a mast that he was astride upon, one end of it still showing a bit of fantastic carving.

The bell was hung on a great hook in the center of the beam. It was not a very large affair, being perhaps of the size of a man's top hat, though slightly flattened at the sides. It was made of silver and richly carved, he could see that, for all its tarnish and decay.

Locking his legs about the mast, he leaned down upon it at length.

"Look out below!" he called down.

Then putting both hands on the bell, with all the aching muscles of his back and arms he lifted slowly, slowly, slowly. The strain was very great. The bell slid upward with a grating sound, quarter-inch by quarter-inch, along the iron hook. Then suddenly, with a violence that well-nigh dragged him from his place, it swung free of the point of the hook and tore itself from his hold, plunging downward. It fell below him with a mighty blow into the soft heap that had formed the Hermit's bed.

TO BE CONTINUED

Digitized by Google

MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY

No. V.

Some Inside Stories—Nipissing & Goldfield Con.

by George Graham Rice

EDITOR'S NOTE—To lay before the public the entire mining-stock game and the handling of hundreds of millions of the public's money—the *whole* game from start to finish, inside and out from West to East and back again, surely that is a tremendous undertaking and one that should win thanks as well as intense interest. That is what Mr. Rice is doing in this series of articles. His story of what has already happened will grip your attention like a vise; the knowledge you will gain from it may, in the future or even in the immediate present, save your pocket-book from being gripped in a vise. This month Mr. Rice gives us the inner facts in the manipulation of Nipissing and Goldfield Consolidated. Cleaned out financially by his experiences in Nevada, he goes to New York and learns the Wall Street end of the game. Returning to the West, he reaches Reno just a week before the stampede to the new mining-camp of Wonder. Then follows his "run-in" with United States Senator Nixon, the formation of Nat. C. Goodwin & Co., and the trouble at Goldfield culminating in the arrival of United States troops. Next month the narrative reaches the great Rawhide boom and the promotion of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company. Mr. Rice is again thrown into the seething game of high finance in Wall Street, where his experiences reach the height of the spectacular and his revelations become still more significant.

THE embarrassment of the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company, described in the July ADVENTURE, was disastrous to Goldfield. The decline and fall of the camp dated from that very hour.

The *Goldfield News*, of nation-wide circulation in those days and up to then unshackled, sought to stem the tide. It published a double-leaded editorial, in full-face type, setting forth that the Sullivan Trust Company had gone down with its flag nailed to the masthead of a declining market and had lost its last dollar supporting its own stocks.

The camp took courage. Soon it became evident that the initial smash in stock-market values was not sufficient to convince the natives that the death-knell of the market for its long line of mining securities had been sounded.

The population of Goldfield was 15,000. Its life could not be snuffed out in a day. Great was the depreciation in the market price of Goldfield mining issues, but not to an extent as yet that indicated the almost

Digitized by Google

complete annihilation of values which followed. Final destruction for the general list, with some scattering exceptions, came only after a "starving-out" siege on the part of investors, who refused to commit themselves farther and gradually resorted to liquidation.

Listed Goldfield securities, nearly 200 in number, and valued in the markets at above $150,000,000 during the boom, had within two months shown a falling off of $60,000,000 in market value, but the list on the average was still quoted higher than the promotion prices.

On January 18, 1907, fifteen days after the newspapers throughout the land carried front-page stories of the failure of the Sullivan Trust Company, the stocks promoted by the trust company were still in demand in all mining-share markets of the country at an average price not below that at which original subscriptions were accepted from the public.

Jumping Jack, promoted at 25 cents, was quoted at 30 cents bid. Stray Dog Manhattan, promoted at 45 cents, was in demand at 49 cents. Lou Dillon, promoted at 25 cents, was still wanted at 26. Indian Camp, sold originally to the public at 25, was quoted at 85 bid. Silver Pick Extension, promoted at 25, was 21 bid, a loss of 4 cents from the promotion price. Eagle's Nest Fairview was quoted at 25, off 10 cents from the promotion figure. These prices represented terrific losses from the "highs" that had been reached during the height of the Goldfield boom, yet the average market price was still above the subscription price of the shares at which the public was first allowed to participate. A remarkable part of this demonstration was that for twenty days no inside support had been lent to these stocks. The Sullivan Trust Company being in trouble, the markets had been left to the mercy of short-sellers and market sharpshooters generally.

Having settled the trust company's liabilities of $1,200,000 by tying up in trust all of its securities and the other assets, of which the creditors agreed to accept in full quittance 80 per cent. of the proceeds and to turn back to the trust company 20 per cent., I returned to New York during the last week in January. I was again out of a job —and broke.

I visited the offices of mining-stock brokers in Wall Street and Broad Street. Wherever I went a hearty handclasp was extended. Not one of the Eastern stock brokers was involved to the extent of a single dollar in the Sullivan Trust Company failure.

The brokers were convinced that the embarrassment was honest. The trust company's credit had always been good. Had the failure been meditated, I could have involved Eastern brokers for at least $1,000,000. Because I didn't, New York brokers were not slow to express their good feeling. A number of them offered to extend a helping hand did I wish to embark on a new enterprise.

PECULIARLY enough—or shall I say, naturally—after tossing off the trust company's millions, of which half were mine, in a vain endeavor to support the market for its stocks, I was as full of spirit as the month of May. I had been broke before, and the sensation was not new to me. Withal, I had profited. A new fund of experience was mine. Even though I had not gathered shekels as a result of my hard work in Goldfield, I had learned something—I had acquired the rudiments of a great business.

Goldfield had been the mining emporium —the security factory. New York was the recognized market center. Market handling had been my weak spot. I now had a chance to witness the performance of some past-masters in the art of market manipulation, and I tried to make the best of the opportunity.

I watched intently the daily sessions of the New York Curb. I was in and out of brokerage offices hourly. Nothing that transpired escaped me.

Within a month I heard enough and saw enough to convince me that, daring as were the operations of the mergerers and waterers of Goldfield Consolidated, in that they ballooned the price of their security at its inception some $29,000,000 (400 per cent) above the accepted intrinsic worth and were able to get the public in at top prices, their activities were but amateurish when compared with the stock-market campaign in Nipissing, which was now transpiring on the New York Curb.

In the Nipissing campaign tens of millions of the public's money went glimmering, several great promoters' fortunes were reared as by magic, some big names and big

Digitized by Google

reputations were tarnished, and dollars in $1,000,000 blocks were juggled like glass balls under the touch of sleight-of-hand performers.

AN ORGY IN MARKET MANIPULATION .

THIS market melodrama was well staged. It had a sensational start-off, and action was at high tension every minute. The performance had covered a period of seven months when I arrived in New York, and was reaching its climax. It was a wild orgy in market-manipulation and money-fleecing that had no parallel in history from the early Comstock days up to and including Greenwater. As a mining-stock boom it was a dizzy, bewildering success—full of red fire and explosions to the last curtain climax.

W. B. Thompson, Montana mine promoter and money-getter; Captain Joseph R. Delamar, famed as a daring adventurer on land and sea, and recently a highly successful financier, mine-owner, stock-market operator and art collector; John Hays Hammond, mining engineer, promoter, politician and ambitious society leader; A. Chester Beatty, millionaire mining engineer, and the seven Guggenheim brothers, were in the all-star cast. Mr. Thompson, by reason of the fact that he was market manager, was most under the spotlight, although at times he was obscured by the others.

Mr. Thompson was a product of Butte, Montana. Early in the game he had learned the Wall Street lesson that "stocks are made to sell." Born and reared in Butte without the aid of a silver spoon, he had never been "in the money" before coming East. The great pay-streak in the East apparently looked better to him than the pay-streaks that some of his Butte neighbors had missed in their deep-mine operations. He was an ideal man for the Nipissing job, as subsequent events in his career thoroughly confirm. Of a school that believes money in hand to be worth more than mining certificates in the box, Mr. Thompson's route from Montana to Broad Street was via Boston, where he made his first visible stake by marketing stock in the Shannon group of mines.

When the Cobalt excitement was in its infancy Mr. Thompson took a run up to the camp. The Nipissing mine was about the best thing in sight. It was producing real silver. The company was owned by a little club consisting of E. P. Earle, specialist in rare metals, Captain Delamar, millionaire soldier of fortune, E. C. Converse, banker and steel magnate, Ambrose Monnell, R. M. Thompson, Joseph Wharton, since deceased, of Philadelphia, and Duncan Coulson, a rich Canadian lawyer. Considerable silver was being produced. The veins, however, were exceedingly narrow, not more than a few inches wide. It was impossible to block out ore to an extent that would warrant any opinion as to the real measure of the mine's riches. The gentlemen owners were not averse to giving Mr. Thompson an option on 100,000 shares of treasury stock of the 1,200,000 five-dollar shares ($6,000,000), at $2 a share, when he made the proposition, and another 100,000 shares at $2.50. Later, they sold him a call on 50,000 or 100,000 shares around $7. All of this happened in the Summer of 1906, six months before I reached New York and at a time when the country was giving indication of going mining-stock crazy, Nevada stocks having advanced on the New York Curb in the Goldfield boom hundreds per cent.

AFTER the Goldfield boom had gained terrific headway, during the Fall of 1906, when Mohawk was climbing from 10 cents per share toward the $20 mark, which it reached during the climax, the Cobalt mining-stock excitement spread like wildfire. A sudden demand sprang up for Nipissing shares. Mr. Thompson, about this time, connected himself with the old established and conservative banking house of C. Shumacher & Company on Wall Street. The affiliation was calculated to give the promoter of Nipissing stock much standing. The move served well its purpose. The public grabbed at the shares. The price jumped to $4.50 in a jiffy. Mr. Thompson began to let go of stock after the $4 point was reached. He was making a killing, but fed out his optional stock very cautiously at the rate of about 5,000 shares daily, each day at an advance. By the time the price reached $7 Mr. Thompson got suspicious. There was something about the play he could not understand. He had not found it necessary to do much "laundry" work on the Curb market. Every time he offered stock it was lapped up silently and completely. Every time his brokers opened their mouths to sell the certificates they were gobbled.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Thompson stopped putting out any more stock and streaked it up to Cobalt to see what was going on. He had a hard time laying hold of the inside facts, but learned enough to satisfy himself that rich ore had been encountered at depth. He discovered on his return to New York that Captain Delamar had been buying that cheap stock through S. H. P. Pell & Company and was even then the heaviest individual holder, a rank contested only once during the whole campaign, and that by a rank outsider operating through Eugene Meyer, Jr., whose name has never been publicly mentioned as having anything to do with the gamble. This "unknown" was a quiet, mild-spoken, college-bred gentleman. He pulled down $1,500,000 in Nipissing—and kept it.

Upon the return of Mr. Thompson from Cobalt the promoters warmed up to their job. The manipulation which had been begun in a comparatively modest way now showed the spirit of the gambler who plays "the ceiling for the limit." New market-boosting accessories were called into use. They did their work. The game waxed hotter and hotter.

THE GUGGENHEIMS ENTER NIPISSING

BOOM! Boom! Boom! went Nipissing. By the time the price crossed $20 the gamblers and speculators of two continents were on fire with excitement. Presently it became noised about that the Guggenheim family had taken an option on 400,000 shares of Nipissing stock at $25 a share, making the investment $10,000,000, and putting a valuation of $32,000,000 on the property. Furthermore, it was announced that the deal had been made on the report and advice of John Hays Hammond, the international mining engineer, crony of Cecil Rhodes and famed as the head of the profession. As a part and parcel of the remarkable story, it was authoritatively stated that the Guggenheims had paid $2,500,000 cash for the option. W. B. Thompson was said to have negotiated the transaction.

Confirmation of the deal set the gamblers crazy. There could be no risk in following such leadership as the Guggenheims', endorsed by the eminent Hammond. The market boiled up to $30 and then majestically boomed to $33.25. Transactions in this single issue totaled hundreds of thousands of shares a day. Waiters, barkeepers, tailors, seamstresses and tenderloin beauties competed with bankers, merchants, professionals on the regular exchanges, and even ministers of the Gospel, for the privilege of buying Nipissing shares on a valuation of more than $40,000,000 for the mine.

On the way up the original bunch of insiders floated out of their holdings. Most of them had cashed in under $20. Some of them stayed out; others went back, and, like the moth, got burned. W. B. Thompson, it is said, parted with the bulk of his 250,000 to 300,000 shares at from $24.50 up, cleaning up for personal account between $4,500,000 and $5,000,000, according to the estimates of close friends then in his confidence. Never was there a cleaner case of "finding" money for Mr. Thompson. The manipulative campaign, of which he was made manager, was a giant success. The only ability or skill needed, after the Guggenheim deal was made—brilliant deal from a market standpoint!—was the sense to hold on to his optioned stock until his associates, the Guggenheim following, and the public made a rich, ripe and juicy market for it.

Mr. Thompson subsequently participated in Cumberland-Ely, El Reyo, Inspiration, La Rose, Utah Copper, Mason Valley, and other mining promotions, and is now rated at $10,000,000 to $12,000,000. He is generally prominent at the nutritious or selling end when a good market exists and is now head of a New York Stock Exchange brokerage and mining promotion firm which publishes its own newspaper.

But what happened to Nipissing? Plenty, and then some, happened. As noted, the stock mounted by flying leaps to $33.25, stayed well above $30 for quite a while, and began slowly to recede. Complacent in the consciousness that they had the biggest silver mine in the world, the Guggenheims allowed all of their friends to share in their good fortune.

Of a sudden, stock from mysterious sources began to press on the market. It came in great quantity and without let-up. Suspicion was aroused in the Guggenheim camp. They despatched A. Chester Beatty, one of their very best expert engineers, and a former protégé of John Hays Hammond, to Cobalt to smell out the trouble. The text of his report was never printed. It didn't have to be. The facts beat it in.

Much of the showy mineral, on which

Digitized by Google

glowing reports as to the fabulous value of the property had been based, contained little or no silver. It was *smaltite*, an ore of the metal cobalt, closely resembling many of the silver ores.

The story was given out that Mr. Beatty had reported adversely on account of the unfavorable showing made by mine developments carried out subsequent to Mr. Hammond's report. The miners had run into non-productive calcite a few hundred feet down, it was said.

As a matter of fact, because of the limited amount of all underground development in the interim, there could have been no condition observable in the property as a whole when Mr. Beatty made his examination that was not equally apparent when Mr. Hammond made his report.

The talent jumped to the conclusion that the mine was a "deader."

Many millions in silver bullion have been taken from the property since then, and it is still a great producer, but this is another and a more prosaic story. This deals with the stock-gambling feature of the record.

Scenes of the wildest disorder were witnessed on the Curb in those early days of 1907 soon after my return from Goldfield. The Guggenheims "laid down" on their option, getting out as best they could. According to published reports, they charged to profit and loss the $2,500,000 originally put up, besides paying the $1,500,000 to $2,000,000 in losses of personal friends for whose misfortune they felt personally responsible. Be that as it may, the Guggenheims emerged from the campaign with damage to their market reputation and standing from which they have never fully recovered. Previous to their acquaintance with the Cobalt bonanza, they had a blindly idolatrous following that would have invested hundreds of millions on a tip from them. They have never regained the position in this respect they then held.

NIPISSING ON THE TOBOGGAN

THE price of Nipissing tobogganed from $33 to under $6 with terrific speed. W. B. Thompson and his associates, who had unloaded their holdings on the way up, were reported to have taken advantage of the Beatty report and to have sold the market short on the way down, making another "clean-up" of millions. The stock hit a few hard spots on the descent, but when the wreckage was cleared away and the dead and wounded assembled, there wasn't hospital or morgue space to accommodate half of them. The final carnage and mutilation was shocking beyond description.

The public had once more been landed with the goods. It had eaten up Nipissing stock on a $43,000,000 valuation which broke to $7,000,000 or $8,000,000 within the space of a few days. This $35,000,000 slaughter represents only a fraction of the actual losses, for fabulous amounts were sacrificed in marginal accounts. The daily aggregate of open accounts in Nipissing during the months of keenest excitement probably averaged not less than five times the total capitalization. Actual losses were therefore far larger than would appear from a merely superficial calculation. The public contributed $75,000,000 to $100,000,000 to its Nipissing experience fund.

There has always been more or less mystery as to just what John Hays Hammond said orally to the Guggenheims to lead them into the crowning humiliation of their business career. It did not appear in his written and published report, for in that document is to be found a neat little hedge to the effect that "if" conditions as revealed to him were maintained, the values would be, etc., etc. That little "if" was the Hammond saving clause, although it did not save that $1,000,000-a-year job of his, about which some of his admirers have liked to talk in joyous chorus, nor did it save the public from massacre.

ANOTHER Nipissing mystery is the sustained professional and personal cordiality still existing between the eminent John Hays Hammond and the scarcely less eminent A. Chester Beatty. For a little while after Mr. Beatty had to turn down his chief their relations appeared to have been strained. But this was not for long. Mr. Beatty also severed connections with the Guggenheim pay-roll, and the two great engineers were soon again, and are now, on the best of terms.

On rainy days when the tickers drone along and there is no exciting news, evil-minded derelicts of the memorable Nipissing campaign are prone to figure how much a man might have made in the market with a foreknowledge of the two adverse reports and to figure on the sporting chances for a "double cross" that such a situation would hold.

Digitized by Google

Scandal mongers, too, who have watched closely the friendship which exists between W. B. Thompson and John Hays Hammond often ask unkindly what has cemented the bond between the two. Recently, when the Rocky Mountain Club needed a new club-house, Messrs. Hammond and Thompson subscribed an equal amount—a goodly sum it was—to build it.

They are seen much together in public and seem to have many tastes in common. Mr. Thompson, whose strangely fortunate campaign in Nipissing on the New York Curb was helped to a triumphant promotion climax by the Hammond report to the Guggenheims, bears Mr. Hammond no ill-will for that—and who would blame him for the kindly feeling?

WHO GOT THE $75,000,000?

BUT what of the public? It played $75,000,000 to $100,000,000 into the game, and has never yet learned who got it. Who did get it? Some of the details of the grand separation scheme have been set forth in the foregoing, but nothing like enough to satisfy the curiosity of the public who footed the bill, paid the freight, contributed sucker-toll for the whole prodigious sum.

Did the author of the report on the strength of which tens of millions were plunged on Nipissing by an army of deluded investors and speculators ever suffer in fortune by the mischance or misshot, or whatever name you may give the "come-on" document? Not that you could notice. True, he gave up his alleged $1,000,000 job with the Guggenheims. But is he not a heavy contributor to the Republican national campaign fund, a close personal friend of the Administration, and did he not represent this great Government as Special Ambassador at the Coronation of England's King? Was he not talked of as running mate for Mr. Taft, and did he not organize the National League of Republican Clubs two years ago? He is tremendously rich and round-shouldered under a mountain-high burden of honors.

Every mother's son of the old Nipissing crowd is at this very hour up and at it in regions where the public's money flows. Many of them still have a grip on the property. It was a good old cow to milk. E. P. Earle, who was president of Nipissing in 1906, headed the company four years later. Captain Delamar slipped down and away (he's now in on the extravagantly touted and soon-to-be-brought-out Porcupine Dome Mines Company), and so did E. C. Converse, whose time is all taken up managing the Stock Exchange bank-note engraving monopoly and a couple of banks and trust companies. W. B. Thompson, who came into the Nipissing directory in 1907, still sticks in spite of the awful experience of 1906–07.

Has an outraged Government ever raised hue and cry against these eminent captains of industry? Not yet, nor soon.

What difference is there between the respectable multi-millionaire bankers putting across a losing promotion and the little fellow? Both may be equally honest or equally crooked, yet in equity both are entitled to the same treatment and the same consideration. Their operations differ only in degree. The aim of each is to get the public's money. And the big fellow is more dangerous by a hundred thousand degrees.

Where does real tangible evidence of a conspiracy to defraud in Nipissing exist? Does *any* exist? Now I venture to say that you could put on the scent any young man who is a graduate of the public schools, and within thirty days he would obtain enough evidence to prove to any jury in the land that the manipulators of that stock used improper measures to get the public's money.

A scrutiny of the files of the newspapers during the progress of the malodorous Nipissing campaign reveals many strange happenings. It shows, among other things, most remarkable willingness on the part of financial writers for the press of that day to say every possible good word for the manipulators and to feed the public appetite for sensational gossip concerning the gamble.

How this was done is easily understood by those familiar with Wall Street publicity. It was an open secret on the Street at that time that many writers for the press were subjected to strongest temptation to lend their hand to the game of publicity. The columns of the daily newspapers carry in themselves evidence to show that the attempts were not always in vain.

ONE little story will illustrate the methods employed. The business manager of a widely known and reputable daily financial publication was stopped one day by a man active in Nipis-

Digitized by Google

sing and told he had been put into 500 shares of the Nipissing stock at the market price when the stock was still selling under $10 and at the time when it was being groomed for the terrific rise which followed and which did not culminate until $33 had been passed. The newspaper man was not above making a turn in the Street, but he objected to taking it that way. He politely turned down the proposition, saying that he did not wish any part of it.

The tempter then went to him on another tack, agreeing to carry the stock for him, so that he would have no risk whatever, at the same time remarking that, in turn for the favor, generous recognition in the news columns of the publication, in support of the Curb campaign, would be expected. Again the newspaper man declined, this time with unmistakable emphasis. He intimated cannily that while he might be taken on he might not be told when to get off, adding that he might be discharged if he fell for anything of that sort. When the market price toppled from $33 back to around $6 this man's newspaper did not carry any front-page story denouncing the outrage upon the public.

I do not know that the manipulators of Nipissing "got to" his employers, but I do know of some newspapers in New York which pose before the public as embodying the very highest type of newspaper morality and which have at their head, either as part owners or as editors, men who were taken in hand by Wall Street magnates at a period when they were dependent for their daily livelihood on their weekly wage, and were lifted into the millionaire division by being put into "good things." Do you suppose newspapers presided over by those men are going to say a word against the enterprises of their benefactors? Conversely, if their benefactors happen to be bothered by any man whose business purposes run contrary to theirs, how far, do you think, these gentlemen of the press would go in their own news columns to poison the public mind against the enterprise of their patron's enemy?

When I witnessed the climax of W. B. Thompson's marvelously successful campaign in Nipissing on the New York Curb, I was fresh from Goldfield. My recollection is that my chief thought at that time, with the Goldfield Consolidated swindle fresh in my mind, was simply that the Western multi-millionaire highbinder promoter didn't class with his Eastern prototype. Indeed, the two appeared to be of different species, as different as the humble but noisy coyote from the Abyssinian man-eating tiger.

The late Spring of 1907 found me back in Nevada. I selected Reno as a central point for residence and decided to locate there. Eastern stock markets appeared to be beyond my ken. It seemed quite apparent that the Western game, as compared with the Eastern, was one of marbles as against millions. In New York's financial mart I felt like a minnow in a sea of bass. Without millions for capital, Nevada appealed to me as a more likely field of usefulness. I believed in Nevada's mineral resources. Having seen Goldfield evolve from a tented station on the desert with a hundred people into a city of 15,000 inhabitants; from a district with a few gold "prospects" into a series of mines producing the yellow metal at the rate of nearly $1,000,000 a month, I was enthused with the idea that there were other goldfields yet unexplored in the battle-born State and that opportunity was bound to come to me if I pitched my tent on the ground.

THE WONDER MINING-CAMP STAMPEDE

I WAS back in Nevada just a week when a stampede into a new mining camp called Wonder took place. I was quick to join in the rush. The Philadelphia crowd who owned control of the big Tonopah mine had annexed a property there which they named the Nevada Wonder. It boasted of a big tonnage of low-grade silver-gold ore.

On arrival at Wonder, I found my former Goldfield partner, L. M. Sullivan, on the ground. He entreated me to allow him to cut in on any deal I made. A bargain was struck. He agreed to advance all the money and I was to receive half of the profits for my work. The corporation of Sullivan & Rice was formed. We purchased the Rich Gulch group of claims, a likely piece of ground with a well defined ledge, and incorporated the Rich Gulch Wonder Mining Company. A company with the usual million-share capitalization was formed to operate the property. A high-class directorate was secured. T. F. Dunnaway, vice-president and general manager of the Nevada, California & Oregon Railroad, accepted the presidency. Hon. John Sparks, Governor

Digitized by Google

of Nevada, became first vice-president. U. S. Webb, Attorney General of California, accepted the second vice-presidency. D. B. Boyd, for twenty-five years successively Treasurer of Washoe County, Nevada, was made treasurer.

The first advertised offering of treasury stock of the Rich Gulch Wonder carried the names of forty leading mining-stock brokers, situated in various cities stretching from New York to Honolulu, who had signified over their signatures their willingness to undertake the sale of treasury stock at 25 cents per share on a basis of 20 per cent. commission. The first thousand shares of treasury stock at 25 cents was sold to Superintendent McDaniel of the Nevada Wonder mine. This convinced us that we had a good "prospect."

I had my doubts about the successful promotion of any Nevada mining company at this period, because of the terrific slump which was transpiring in Goldfield issues and also because of the smack in the face that mining-stock investors had just received in Nipissing. It was my idea that if the Rich Gulch Wonder made any money for us the cashing would have to be delayed until mills were erected and the property became a producer. I was willing to go ahead on that basis.

The sale of treasury stock was slow, but sufficient was disposed of to warrant the expense for mine development of at least $2,000 a month for six months, and that appeared far enough to provide for in advance.

PENDING the making good of this proposition in a financial way, I determined I would help finance a newspaper publication at Reno which would give to mining-stock speculators an unbiased statement of mining and market conditions as they existed. In the mining camps it was considered tantamount to financial suicide for the home publication to reflect on the merits of any locally owned property. Strictures were looked upon as "knocks," and "knockers" are taboo in mining camps. Moreover, mining-camp papers could hardly make both ends meet at the time without support from inside interests, and unprejudiced statements of fact that were detrimental to a local property could hardly be expected.

Merrill A. Teague was made editor of the new publication, which was called the *Nevada Mining News*. Mr. Teague had just blown into Reno from Goldfield where he had been connected with the Nevada Mines News Bureau, a daily market sheet. Before coming to Nevada he had served in an editorial capacity on the *Baltimore American* and the *Philadelphia North American*. Mr. Teague is the possessor of a facile pen. At $50 a week, which was his stipend at the beginning, I was convinced that the *Nevada Mining News* had a cheap editor. When news was scarce he could write more about nothing than any man I ever met before. Incidentally, he could go further without finding a stopping place in a crusade than any man I had ever bumped up against. That was his drawback. However, compared with the work of other newspaper men then employed in Nevada, his stuff was in a class by itself and was commercially very valuable.

TEAGUE ATTACKS SENATOR NIXON

MR. TEAGUE was on the job just a week when he cut loose with an attack on United States Senator George S. Nixon of Nevada in a front-page story headed "Goldfield in the Grasp of Wall Street Sharks." The article declared that Senator Nixon, needing $1,000,000 to conclude the merger plans of the Goldfield Consolidated, had got it through B. M. (Berney) Baruch of the New York Stock Exchange, factotum of Thomas F. Ryan, at terrible cost. The loan was made at a time when Goldfield Consolidated was selling around $10 per share. In consideration for the loan, Senator Nixon, acting for the company, gave Mr. Baruch an option on 1,000,000 shares of treasury stock of the Goldfield Consolidated at $7.75 per share. At the time Mr. Teague commenced his onslaught Goldfield Consolidated shares had slumped from $10 to $7.50. Mr. Teague alleged that the market on the stock was being juggled and speculators were being milked. Mr. Baruch, he asserted, had sold the stock down to $7.50 per share on the strength of his option, and was now tempted to break the market, sell the stock short and cover all at much lower prices.

Within two weeks after the publication of Mr. Teague's exposé of the terms of the outstanding option to Mr. Baruch, Goldfield Consolidated shares dropped to under $6. The story evidently had its effect.

Digitized by Google

The issue of the paper which chronicled the break to $6 contained an editorial headed "Nixon in the Rolê of Brutus." It demanded of Senator Nixon that he stand behind the stock and support the market, and also called upon him to declare the payment of dividends which he had promised to stockholders in his annual report dated two months prior.

People in Nevada began asking, "Who is Teague?" Mr. Teague caused the publisher of the *Nevada Mining News*, who was Hugh Montgomery, formerly business manager of the *Chicago Tribune*, to explain over his signature that Mr. Teague had been the political editor of the *Baltimore American*, later an editorial writer for the *Philadelphia North American*, and that while on the *Philadelphia North American* he had crusaded against get-rich-quick swindlers who had headquarters in Philadelphia, with the result that the Storey Cotton Company, the Provident Investment Bureau, the Haight & Freese Company and other bucketshop concerns were put out of business. On evidence furnished by him, it was stated, Mr. Teague secured the conviction by the United States Government of Stanley Frances and Frank C. Marrin as chief conspirators in the $400,000 Storey cotton swindle. Finally, the article said, Mr. Teague was engaged by a far-famed magazine to expose bucketshop iniquities in the United States. This series of articles had appeared in 1906.

The biographical sketch seemed to satisfy readers that they were getting their "dope" straight on Goldfield Consolidated. My name at this time did not appear in connection with the publication except as part of the aggregation of Sullivan & Rice who advertised therein, but I was openly accused by Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield of dictating the policy of the paper. This was a half-truth. My sympathies were with the stockholders of Goldfield Consolidated—that's all.

THE story is told in Nevada that when Senator Nixon received the check for $1,000,000 from Berney Baruch, after having executed notes of the Goldfield Consolidated, signed by himself as president and endorsed by him as an individual, he took luncheon at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York. When the waiter presented the bill the Senator ostentatiously tendered the $1,000,000 check in payment. The waiter put it all over the Senator by politely stating that if he wished to pay his dinner check out of the proceeds, Proprietor Boldt would undoubtedly attend to the matter for him. The Senator was forced to tell the waiter he was "only joking."

The *Nevada Mining News* appeared to be catching on and was now printing 28,000 copies weekly. Sample copies were sent in every direction with the idea of acquainting investors with its existence.

A day after the issue appeared containing the editorial in which Senator Nixon was accused of playing the rolê of Brutus, I was stopped on the street by the editor of the *Reno Gazette*, a newspaper which is loyally attached to the Senator and his friends.

"The Senator wants to see you, Rice. Better go over to the bank right away. If you know what's good for you, you'll do it," the *Gazette* man said.

"I will, like ——!" I replied. "My office is up in the Clay Peters Building, and if the Senator has anything to say to me he can give me a call. I am not one of his sycophants, and I am not going."

I didn't go.

An hour afterward the editor of the *Gazette* met me again. "Senator Nixon wants to see you at his office right away," he said bluntly.

"About what?" I inquired.

"About articles which have appeared in the *Nevada Mining News*," he answered.

"Very well," I replied, "I'll send the editor over."

Turning to Mr. Teague, I said, "I have no business with Senator Nixon, and if he has anything to communicate regarding the newspaper you, the editor, are the man for him to say it to."

Mr. Teague went over to the Nixon National Bank and entered the directors' room. My stenographer accompanied him as far as the door and took a seat outside, in the banking room.

As Mr. Teague entered, Senator Nixon jumped to his feet. He looked black as thunder. He quivered with rage.

"Why don't Rice come over here himself, eh? He daren't! I've got his record from boyhood jacketed in these drawers. While I have not read it, I know the story, and I am going to have it published in a bunch of newspapers so the world can know who is holding me up to public scorn!" the Senator spluttered.

Digitized by Google

In relating what transpired Mr. Teague later informed me that the Senator's wrathful indignation appealed to him as so grotesquely comic he felt like laughing, but he thought it a poor newspaper stunt to incense him further at a moment when it looked as if, by appeasing him, he could tempt him into volubility. Soon Mr. Teague had the Senator at ease, pouring forth a long interview, full of acrimony and affectation, which Mr. Teague promised to publish in the *Nevada Mining News*.

Mr. Teague reported to me that the Senator construed his pacifying attitude as meaning that I would undoubtedly "listen to reason" and that his threat would most certainly accomplish its purpose.

"CALLING FOR A SHOW-DOWN"

WHEN Mr. Teague finished narrating to me what had transpired I was beside myself. Presently I gave him these instructions: "Write out the interview with the Senator. Have two carbon copies made. When finished, take the three copies over to the Senator and have him read them and put his O. K. on them. After you have done that, give the Senator one copy, give the printer a copy, and put the other copy in the safe. As soon as the copy of the interview is in the printer's hands, sit down and write an editorial. Head it 'A United States Senator with a Blackmailing Mind.' Publish my record in full. Tell of everything of any consequence I ever did, good or bad. Parallel my record with the Senator's record. Tell the people of Nevada all the facts about the Senator's threat. Say to them nobody can blackmail me, and ask them to choose between us."

On May 25, 1907, the editorial, headed "Nixon a Senator with a Blackmailing Mind," appeared. It was a passionate denouncement, calculated to stir the blood. Also there appeared Senator Nixon's interview in full.

In the interview the Senator had made an effort to disentangle himself from a seemingly inextricable network in which he was enmeshed, and the paper contained still another editorial lambasting him in amplitude for trying to practise on the credulity of the newspaper's readers. The editor accused him of equivocation, artful dodging, false coloring, exaggeration, suppression of truth, cupidity and knavery.

The arraignment wrought an undoubted sensation.

The effect on the Nevada public was unmistakable. It reminded me more of the motionless and breathless attitude of an audience at the third-act climax of a four-act drama, than anything else. The Senator was not seen on the streets of Reno for two months afterward. For a fortnight afterward he didn't even call at the offices of the bank. When he did finally resume his visits to the bank he came in his automobile. He was whisked to the door of the building, immediately secreted himself in the directors' room and was not get-at-able.

Leading citizens, including the directors of a number of banks in Reno, made clandestine calls at my office, shook my hand, felicitated me over the stand I took, and went away. Even George Wingfield, the Senator's partner, it was reported (and I afterward corroborated this from the lips of George Wingfield himself), backed me up in the stand I had taken. The general sentiment in the State appeared to be that the threat was a lowdown trick, and that of the two I had the less to be ashamed of.

When the Senator read the article headed "Nixon a Senator with a Blackmailing Mind" it is said he telegraphed to former Governor Thomas of Colorado, his counsel, and asked him to come to Reno.

"If I don't say something in answer to this awful attack, I'll choke!" cried the Senator as he nervously walked the floor.

"Did you sign that interview which they published?" asked Governor Thomas.

"Yes," said the Senator.

"Well, then, if you say anything at all now, *they'll* choke *you*," answered Governor Thomas.

During the course of our attacks on Senator Nixon in the *Nevada Mining News* which followed at various intervals, the newspaper accused him of making promises of early dividends to Goldfield Consolidated stockholders which he knew he could not keep; of having been the State Agent in Nevada of the Southern Pacific Company at $150 per month during the Huntington régime when legislatures were bought; of having bilked the investing public out of millions in Goldfield; of having carved his fortune, that made possible the acquisition by him and his partner of control of the Goldfield Consolidated, out of a gambling house in Tonopah; of having gathered his first mining property

Digitized by Google

and mining-stock interests in Goldfield from prospectors who lost money and surrendered their mining claims and stock certificates to the gambling house in lieu of the cash; and of being generally a financial and political freebooter of the most despicable sort. And the Senator never sued for libel nor proceeded in the courts in any way whatsoever to obtain a retraction.

MANIPULATING GOLDFIELD CON.

ABOUT a week after the publication of the editorial headed "Nixon a Senator with a Blackmailing Mind," when Goldfield Consolidated stock had slumped to around $7, the *Nevada Mining News* in big bold-faced type urged its readers to place their buying orders for Goldfield Consolidated at $4 a share, saying that New York mining-stock brokers advised their clients that the stock would almost certainly go down to that figure because of the Senator's mistakes in the financial management of the company. That edition contained another editorial on Senator Nixon, headed "Branding a Bilker." It accused him of saying in his annual report a few months previous that payments of dividends on a regular basis would commence within a short time, and contrasted this statement with the signed interview published in the *Nevada Mining News*, in which he said dividends would be paid "whenever the trustees thought it wise to do so *and not before.*"

Within a day thereafter the stock "busted" wide open to $5⅛ bid, $5¼ asked, and the whole Goldfield list smashed farther in sympathy. By June 8th Goldfield Consolidated had crashed to $4.50.

On the dip from $7.50 to $4.50 an opportunity had been offered to Berney Baruch and his associates to buy back in the open market all of the stock they might have sold on the way down from $10 to $7.75, which was the option price. Then the stock was promptly manipulated back to $7. On the way back to $7, the outstanding short interest (of other traders who had accompanied the decline with their selling orders) was forced to cover.

To help along the covering by outsiders up to the $7 point a report was circulated by lieutenants of Senator Nixon in Reno that a dividend would be declared before the end of June, and almost simultaneously the general manager of the mining company in Goldfield put forth a similar tip. As the market began to recover toward the $7 point, Senator Nixon went to San Francisco and was seen often at the sessions on the floor of the San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board. On the day before the bulge to $7 he was quoted in a San Francisco newspaper as saying that Goldfield Consolidated was such a good thing he would not take $20 per share for his stock.

When the stock hit $7 and the shorts were being squeezed the hardest, Senator Nixon was quoted as saying in still another interview that a dividend was not far away. This interview was carried over the telegraph wires to all market centers by the Associated Press. At the same time a story was printed in the New York *Times* saying that it was reported on the Street that J. Pierpont Morgan, acting for the Baruch-Ryan crowd, had taken over the control of the Goldfield Consolidated. The shorts were successfully driven to cover. Then the price eased off again in a day from $7 to $6⅛.

A month later Mr. Teague became editor in chief of the *Nevada State Journal* and severed his connection with the *Nevada Mining News*. I succeeded Mr. Teague as editor and my name appeared at the head of the editorial columns. At about the same time the Sullivan & Rice enterprise was abandoned. I discovered that most of the money Mr. Sullivan had put into the corporation had been borrowed by him from a member of my own family with whom he had hypothecated most of his stock in the company. A rumpus ensued which ended in the shutting up of the shop.

By August Goldfield Consolidated had been manipulated back to $8.37½ a share. Mr. Baruch's option could certainly prove of little value to him unless the stock sold higher at periods than $7.50. But he now evidently found it a hard job to hold the stock above $7.50. By September it had receded again to $7.40. At this period it was reported in Reno that George Wingfield, sick of his partner's bad bargain, was beginning to assert himself and demanded that the Baruch option be cancelled at whatever cost.

The erratic price movement of the stock was causing the loss of public confidence. The manipulation appeared to be raw. Without any important transpiration except

Digitized by Google

the news of the Baruch option and the varying statements put out by Senator Nixon from time to time regarding the plans of the company, which was now awaiting the erection of a huge mill before going on a regular producing basis, the stock had dropped from $10 to $4.50, recovered to $7 and eased off to $6⅛, rallied to above $8, and was again tumbling.

The option to Mr. Baruch was conceded to be practically a flat failure from a company standpoint, only 20,000 shares of stock having been purchased by Mr. Baruch from the treasury of the company in nine months. The impression prevailed that Mr. Baruch was milking the market and held the option principally as a club to accomplish his market designs. Moreover, nearly every broker, investor and speculator residing in Goldfield by this time had gone broke because of the vagaries of this stock in the market, and the losses in bad loans and unsecured overdrafts incurred by John S. Cook & Company's bank, controlled by Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield, was said to total nearly $2,000,000 as a result of the almost general smash in market values. The entire Goldfield list, with the exception of Goldfield Consolidated, was now selling at 25 cents on the dollar compared with boom prices of less than a year before, and it was a rather ordinary "piker" sort of broker or speculator in Goldfield who at this time could not boast of being in "soak" to John S. Cook & Company's bank anywhere from $15,000 to $100,000.

ON September 23 the Goldfield Consolidated directorate met at Goldfield. After the meeting it was officially announced that the option held by Mr. Baruch on 1,000,000 shares at $7.75 had been canceled and that Mr. Baruch had been given sufficient of the optioned stock to liquidate the $1,000,000 obligation of the company, leaving the company free of debt and with a cash reserve of nearly $2,000,000. It was stated that Mr. Baruch had originally been given the option for services in securing the loan of $1,000,000 from J. Kennedy Todd & Company of New York for 13 months with interest at the rate of 6 per cent, and that the price of $7.75 was an "average" one, indicating that Mr. Baruch held an option on stock at varying figures on a scale up from a considerably lower price than $7.75, which he might have exercised in whole or in part.

It was also disclosed that a large block of Goldfield Consolidated stock had been put up as collateral for the note. Because the officials of the company declared by resolution that the "unused certificates shall be canceled" it was generally believed that the entire 1,000,000 shares under option to Mr. Baruch had been put up as security.

The official statement of the company said that the option had been turned back to the company "on a satisfactory basis." No figures were given out. Dispatches from San Francisco to the *Nevada Mining News*, which I promptly published, alleged that Mr. Baruch was given 200,000 or more shares of Goldfield Consolidated in settlement of the loan to the corporation of $1,000,000 and for the surrender of his option on 1,000,000 shares at an average price of $7.75.

The 200,000 shares of stock was taken out of the collateral at the rate of $5 per share on a day when Goldfield Consolidated was selling around $7.50, after the stock had been manipulated to a fare-ye-well and against a market price of $10 for the stock on the day the option was given.

No denial was ever published. My opinion, based on private investigation and on analysis of the company's reports, is that Mr. Baruch fared even better than as outlined above.

The giving of the option had made it dangerous for anybody except Mr. Baruch to attempt to hold the stock above $7.75 per share after the option had been given, and the company in addition was now mulcted for the difference between the low price per share at which settlement was made with Mr. Baruch and the price at which the stock could have been sold had it been quietly disposed of on the market during the period of nine months which had preceded the date of cancellation. As a matter of fact, there was no necessity at all for settling the loan with stock, the company having in its treasury more than sufficient to repay the loan, and the money was not due. The real purpose, apparently, was to shroud in darkness the exact amount given to Mr. Baruch to release the company from the option and to keep Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield's Goldfield bank, which was the depositary of the mining company, in funds.

Instead of quieting the stockholders the surrender of the option again thrust into the

Digitized by Google

limelight the entire transaction and proved to be an exacerbation.

The immediate effect was that Goldfield Consolidated began to slump again, and in a few days sold down to $6.50. From this point it kept on tobogganing during a period of weeks down to the $3.50 point—a depreciation in market price for the capitalization of the company, within a year of its promotion at $10 a share, of $23,400,000—before rallying once.

ENTER, NAT. C. GOODWIN & CO.

A MINING partnership between Nat. C. Goodwin, the actor, and Dan Edwards had been formed at Reno a little before this time. Dan Edwards was a hustling young mining man who had engaged in the business of "turning" properties to promoters. In August, when Goldfield Consolidated was selling around $7.50, Mr. Edwards had asked me to give him a good market tip. I told him to sell Goldfield Consolidated short.

When it hit $6.50 around October 1st he saluted me thus, "Got to hand it to you. I have been trying to make my new firm stick, but it don't seem to work. I guess I don't know how to handle the situation in times like this. How would you like to join us?"

"How much capital have you got?" I asked.

"Five thousand of Nat's money," he answered.

"Get another man with $5,000," I said, "and I'll talk to you."

A young Easterner engaged in mining, named Warren A. Miller, was stopping at the Riverside Hotel. Within an hour Mr. Edwards had him lined up. A week later Nat. C. Goodwin & Company was incorporated with Nat. C. Goodwin president, Mr. Miller vice-president and general manager, and Dan Edwards secretary. The new corporation engaged to give me a salary for showing it how and an interest for other substantial considerations.

Within a fortnight the corporation of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company was making money, not as promoters, however, but as demoters. Instead of at first promoting a mining company and earning its profits on the constructive side of the market, it turned the tables and made money on the destructive side—of Goldfield Consolidated.

DURING the first half of 1907 I had felt the country's speculative pulse from day to day with the promotion literature of the Sullivan & Rice corporation. Although its new mining company, the Rich Gulch Wonder, had boasted of a very high-class directorate and the property was conceded to have merit, the public refused to enthuse. Instead of subscribing for large blocks, scattering purchases had been made, and money in dribs and drabs had been grudgingly paid over. The Wonder mining camp boom had "died abornin'." Investors seemed to have had enough of mining-stock speculation for a while.

Prices of listed Nevada issues were crumpling like seersucker in the rain. By this time the awful mess that had been made of Goldfield affairs through the mistakes of Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield had resulted in a depreciation in market value of more than $100,000,000 in listed Nevada issues. This in itself was sufficient to kill a world of buying sentiment.

You have to be a rainbow-chaser by nature to be a successful promoter, but even I, despite my chronic optimism, began to feel the influence of what was transpiring. I made a flip-flop and turned bear on the whole market.

On October 17th the Heinze failure occurred in New York. Five days later the embarrassment of the Knickerbocker Trust Company was announced. I glued my ears to the ground.

Nat. C. Goodwin & Company "shorted" the mining-stock market so far as its limited capital would permit. On the day Mr. Heinze went overboard the company was already short 2,000 shares of Goldfield Consolidated at around $6. On hearing that the Knickerbocker Trust Company was in trouble it promptly shorted 2,000 shares more at a lower figure.

On the afternoon when the news reached Reno of the Knickerbocker Trust Company's embarrassment I received a private telegram from Chicago stating that the paper of the State Bank & Trust Company of Goldfield, Tonopah and Carson City had gone to protest in San Francisco. This set my blood tingling. I knew that meant a general Nevada "bust."

Next morning Nat. C. Goodwin & Company shorted 2,000 shares more of Goldfield Consolidated at about $5 ⅛. Later in the day the failure of the State Bank & Trust

Digitized by Google

Company was announced. A run followed on the Nye & Ormsby County Bank and its branches in Reno, Carson City, Tonopah, Goldfield, and Manhattan, and in two hours that institution, too, closed its doors.

Goldfield Consolidated promptly broke to $4 a share. Around this point Nat C. Goodwin & Company covered its short sales, at discretion.

All of the Nixon banks in Nevada experienced runs as a result of the failure of the two Nevada banking institutions. So did the other banks.

Governor Sparks was appealed to by Nevada bank officials between two suns to come to the rescue. Without hesitation he declared a series of legal holidays to enable the banks of the State which were still standing on their feet to catch their breath. These banks finally threw open their doors, but when they did, those of Reno met depositors' withdrawals with asset money instead of legal tender. The only bank in Reno which had refused to take advantage of the enforced legal holidays was the Scheeline Banking & Trust Company. And when asset money was finally resorted to as a makeshift, M. Scheeline, the president, was made custodian of the bonds which were put up by the associated Reno banks to secure payment. This restored confidence.

It was believed in Nevada at the time of the failure of the mining-camp banks, the State Bank & Trust Company and the Nye & Ormsby County, that the Nixon institution in Goldfield would have found it hard to weather the storm but for the fact that the Goldfield bank was believed to have upward of $2,000,000 of the Goldfield Consolidated Mines Company's money on deposit.

When the State Bank & Trust Company went to the wall Senator Nixon, in an interview published in his Reno newspaper, charged the failure of the State Bank & Trust Company to me. He alleged that the State Bank & Trust Company lost $375,000 by the failure of the Sullivan Trust Company ten months before, and that I had broken the bank. The liabilities of the bank were $3,000,000, and its Sullivan Trust Company loss was only "a drop in the bucket." The Senator didn't fool anybody, not even himself. His effort was an ill-concealed attempt to prepossess the public against me, and was received by Nevada people as such.

Senator Nixon indulged in some more "interview" with a view to stemming the tide of liquidation in Goldfield Consolidated. Notwithstanding the fact that the company had only recently resorted to the sale of treasury stock for money-raising purposes, he asserted that a quarterly dividend, payable January 25th, would probably be declared. Beyond a question this statement was made for market purposes at a time when the Senator was sweating money-blood.

The stock promptly tobogganed farther on the strength of the dividend forecast. The Senator's interviews had now become a standing joke in the community. Speculators and brokers had learned the wisdom of "coppering" anything the Senator said.

THE STORY OF THE GOLDFIELD LABOR "RIOTS"

A LARGE force of miners was discharged from the Goldfield Consolidated properties. The action of the company in laying off its men at such a distressful period was denounced. It was alleged that Senator Nixon's Goldfield bank could not afford to pay out the money on deposit to the credit of the company because it was required for bank purposes. The money was apparently being hoarded during the money stringency to help the bank out of a tight place. After-events appeared fully to confirm this theory.

Right in the teeth of the panic, during the depressed and troublous days of the latter part of November;—when current finance was deeply affected; when Goldfield Consolidated was selling below the $4 point and the entire Nevada share list had suffered an average depreciation of about 85 per cent. from the "highs" reached during the Goldfield boom of the year before; when the State of Nevada was racked from end to end by the serious losses incurred by citizens through the failure of the Nye & Ormsby County's and the State Bank & Trust Company's chain of banks, totaling nearly $6,000,000, and it appeared that the credit of the State had already been shattered almost beyond repair—a fresh blow was administered.

Government troops were reported to be en route to Goldfield from San Francisco "to preserve the law." It had been represented to the President of the United States that

Digitized by Google

Goldfield was in a state of anarchy. Goldfield wasn't. As a matter of fact, the situation in Goldfield with the miners, from the standpoint of law and order, was never good, but it was as good then as it had been in eighteen months. True, there had been some lawlessness, but no riot, and the sheriff of the county had made no call whatsoever on the Governor for any aid.

During the first days of the panic Nixon and Wingfield's Goldfield bank, John S. Cook & Company, had tendered the miners the bank's unsecured scrip in lieu of money for the payment of wages. The miners refused acceptance. They were willing to take time-checks of two, three or four months, bearing the mining company's signature, but balked at the idea of becoming creditors of the bank.

It has been stated to me by a number of Goldfield brokers who were present in the camp at the time that the miners had even decided to concede this point, when an outsider secured by intrigue and money sufficient voting power at a meeting of the executive committee of the Miners' Union to pass a resolution objecting to the bank's scrip. The refusal to accept the bank's scrip was at once made an excuse by the Goldfield Mine Owners' Association, which was dominated by George Wingfield, to determine upon a lockout and simultaneously to demand Federal intervention.

If Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield's bank needed money, as the tender of unsecured scrip indicated all too plainly, the complete shutdown which left with the bank as available resources approximately $2,000,000 in the account of the Goldfield Consolidated Mines Company, was a perfect stop-gap; and the need of the presence of troops was a fine co-incidental excuse for the shutdown. Incidentally, it would rid Goldfield of the Miners' Union, which voted to a man against Senator Nixon's Republican candidates for office, and would permit the importation of foreign labor, an expedient which was afterward successfully resorted to.

Senator Nixon brought pressure to bear at Washington. He invoked the good offices of Uncle Sam and urged that Federal troops be sent to the State. He was assisted by Congressman Bartlett in laying the matter before the departments. The wires between Goldfield, Reno, Carson City and Washington were kept hot with an interchange of views. President Roosevelt finally informed the Senator he could not send the soldiers unless the Governor of Nevada wired that a state of anarchy actually existed which the State itself was powerless to put down.

Governor Sparks, honest as the day was long and unsuspecting of any trickery or jobbery, listened to a Goldfield committee and permitted a dispatch to be sent to Washington over his signature representing that such conditions existed.

Thereupon Brigadier-General Funston, at the head of two thousand troops, was ordered to Goldfield. The State being without any militia and the representations made by Governor Sparks in his dispatches being strong on the point that a state of anarchy actually existed in Goldfield, the President finally succumbed.

The maneuver was as swift as it was unexpected. Nevada people at first could not understand what it was all about. Dispatches from Goldfield to Reno said the town was quiet. The nearest approach to an overt act of recent occurrence that had been chronicled was the alleged theft a few days before of a box or two of dynamite, about 300 feet of fuse and a quantity of caps that were said to have been clandestinely removed from the Booth mine in Goldfield. The theft, if theft there was, was charged to the miners, but proof was lacking.

On the arrival of the troops in Goldfield the Goldfield Consolidated announced a new wage scale, reducing the miners' wages from $5 to $4 and in some cases from $5 to $3.50. This was a new move, calculated to rouse the ire of the wage workers and to prolong the lockout. Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield's bank in Goldfield announced at the same time that it would thereafter discharge all of the pay-rolls of the company in gold. But there were no pay-rolls of any consequence then, the mines being shut down.

GENERAL FUNSTON on his arrival in Goldfield interviewed mine operators, union miners and citizens generally with a view to determining the necessity for maintaining Government troops there. He discovered that the Administration had been buncoed. The General wired the President his opinion. President Rooosevelt quickly dispatched a commission to Goldfield to conduct a public inquiry. This commission consisted of Charles B. Neal, Labor Commissioner, Herbert Knox

Digitized by Google

Smith, Commissioner of Corporations, and Lawrence O. Murray, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor. They heard testimony day and night for a week.

They reported to President Roosevelt that there was no occasion for the presence of troops in Goldfield and that the statements telegraphed to President Roosevelt by Governor Sparks, indicating the existence of a state of anarchy, were without justification. The report was given to the Associated Press and received wide publicity. The President also issued a broadside backing up the findings, which was telegraphed far and wide.

Eastern editorial writers poured out torrents of abuse on Governor Sparks. Senator Nixon went unscathed.

THE DEATH OF GOVERNOR SPARKS

FEELING under a weight of obligation to Governor Sparks, who had headed nearly all of the Sullivan Trust Company promotions as president, I tried editorially in the *Nevada Mining News* to justify the Governor's action. But it was a wee voice drowned in an ocean of adverse opinion and was entirely without echo. It didn't even soothe the Governor.

The Governor, honest, simple old man, broken in purse, in health and in spirit, grieved over the President's denouncement, took to bed, and died of a broken heart.

At his imposing funeral pageant in Reno, which was attended by thousands of mourners, who had come from all parts of the State to pay homage to the grand old man and who followed the hearse to the cemetery, Senator Nixon and his partner George Wingfield were conspicuous by their absence.

Even at the moment when the grave closed over his remains the troops were leaving Goldfield.

"It's the 'Dead March,'" said one of the bereaved.

The bringing of Federal troops to Goldfield accomplished its purpose. The Miners' Union was destroyed and sufficient time was gained to enable the financial atmosphere to clarify. By the time the troops departed, Goldfield Consolidated had rallied to $5 per share. The panic was over. Money was comparatively easy again.

I ask the reader's indulgence for having devoted so much space to the facts bearing on the appearance in Nevada of United States troops at a time when there was no valid occasion for their presence. I feel that it is an important chapter of my experiences and is fraught with interest to the general reader, because it illustrates how easy it is to direct the powerful machinery of our great Government so as to carry out the machinations of evil-minded men.

You might think, after this demonstration of the lengths to which Senator Nixon went to accomplish a set purpose, and after witnessing the success which attended his efforts, that a poverty-stricken individual like myself, who had had the hardihood to conduct a newspaper campaign in the Senator's own home town against his financial and political activities, would judge it the better part of valor to emigrate from the State. Well, I didn't. I stayed right on the spot. That I would hear from Washington later I had no doubt, but I stuck, just the same, until my business interests called me away.

I wasn't wrong in my deductions. Within a few months thereafter there came a visit to my office in Reno by a postal inspector, who was apparently "sicked on to the job," and but for the quick intercession by telegraph of United States Senator Francis B. Newlands of Nevada with the Postmaster General at Washington, I am certain that potent influences even at that early day would successfully have "started something." But of this more at another time. I am ahead of my story.

It was in November, 1907, when the panic was at its height, that the great mining-camp boom of Rawhide was born. By January, 1908, when the troops evacuated Goldfield, and Goldfield Consolidated shares began to rally from the low point, the stampede into Rawhide, which grew later to a size where it was without parallel in the history of boom camps of the United States, began to gather force. Soon I was in the heat of it.

Before long I was carving for myself a new career as a mining promoter.

(The great Rawhide stampede and the promotion of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company, which finally pitch-forked Mr. Rice into the maelstrom of the Wall Street promotion game, with offices a block deep on Broad Street, New York, will be the subject of Mr. Rice's narrative in the September number of ADVENTURE.)

Digitized by Google

THE MYSTERY of PRINCE MARMOROFF'S GOLD PLATE

by ALBERT KINROSS

CHAPTER I

PRINCE MARMOROFF ARRIVES

THE FINEST square in London is Belgrave Square, and Dunster House is the finest house in Belgrave Square. This mansion, once the town house of the Dukes of Dunster, now unfortunately vanished from our peerage, had long been up for sale or even for hire. You could buy it outright or take it on a lease, provided—always provided—you had a purse as deep as the Atlantic, as wide as the Pacific, and as pearly and treasure-laden as the Indian Ocean.

Nobody, it appeared, had such a purse, and for years the palace of the extinct Dukes of Dunster had stood silent, untenanted; by night a blot on the fair face of Belgrave Square, by day a dingy monument, the very vastness of whose upkeep daunted the craven souls of millionaires, especially those with spendthrift wives and families. Now and again, indeed, you saw the gleam of a bedroom-candle in the basement, or perhaps the amber glow of lamplight stole through the area-rails; but this was only the caretaker, going to her well-earned rest, or maybe the caretaker's husband, reading the paper over his evening quart of home-brewed lemonade.

They were a trustworthy couple, sober, as has been hinted, honest, reliable; and, as is so often the case, they answered to the name of Jones. The man, an ex-trooper of the Royals, had strict instructions to defend the Grinling Gibbons ceilings with a revolver and his life, nor was he to let any one, however plausible, remove the grand staircase (brought here from Dunster Abbey), the carved chimney-piece that was so coveted a feature of the great ball-room, and, last but not least, the four panels, representing the Seasons, which Boucher had painted and which were firmly fixed upon the boudoir walls.

And furthermore, such articles having an irresistible attraction for the species, all Americans, the moment they betrayed themselves, were to be excluded from the house. They could, of course, buy or hire the house, but they were not to be admitted as mere "possibles." They were to be told that all particulars could be obtained from Messrs. Bouthrop in Ryder Street, and that

Digitized by Google

they had better go. In case of resistance, Jones was to shoot at their legs, when male, or, if female, summon Mrs. Jones, who would do the rest. Ordinary felons, whatever their nationality, were to be shot outright.

Such were the instructions received by Mr. Jones.

Mrs. Jones, on the other hand, was to go unarmed. It was her duty to show all duly accredited "possibles" over the vast establishment, to sing its praises and exclaim how low—considering—was the price of purchase or of hire. She was to remove dust and banish cobwebs; she was to keep two cats—neither more nor less—and feed them and sustain them; nor was she permitted to receive her friends in any portion of the establishment or its appurtenances. She felt, however, in spite of these drawbacks and of several others here omitted, that Jones and herself were comfortably, nay, palatially, settled for the remainder of their lives. She was mistaken. On the fourth day of January, 1910, Prince Marmoroff appeared and took the house.

On the twenty-seventh of January Prince Marmoroff took possession. The Joneses removed to Grosvenor Gardens, where, after her long and settled residence in Belgrave Square, Mrs. Jones now often remarked "you can hardly breathe." Still, the change had its advantages. She was again allowed to receive and entertain her friends; while Jones could safely stow away his revolver and leave ceilings, walls and staircase to defend themselves. They were all very ordinary, and so we can return at once to Dmitri Mikhailovich Marmoroff.

CHAPTER II

ALL LONDON IS STIRRED

WHO was Prince Marmoroff, and why had he taken Dunster House? All London asked that very pertinent question. Who was this upstart successor to the Dukes of Dunster, and, incidentally, the Joneses? Society studied its halfpenny papers and its sixpennies; but, as they all contradicted one another and agreed only in the statement that Marmoroff was a Russian and a prince, (which everybody knew already), Society was baffled and had to make up fibs and stories of its own. Neither fibs nor stories, however, were half so good as those that had been invented by the newspapers. But at last the truth leaked out. Lady de Beaune had it from the Marchioness of Wye who had it from the Countess of Clarges who had it from Lady Broadnax, whose husband, Sir Philip, had actually been Ambassador in Petersburg, that Marmoroff was second wealthiest nobleman in Russia. First came Chaginski and then Marmoroff.

This was interesting, and the Countess, who had seven unmarried daughters, next inquired whether his Highness was a bachelor. But here, however, information ceased and one could do no more than guess and take one's chances. Her ladyship sent the man cards for both her parties. So did the Marchioness, and so did Lady de Beaune. The Broadnaxes, being in mourning, merely deposited their pasteboards. A contemptuous silence followed on these overtures. The great house stood more firmly closed than ever; its tenant remained mysterious and aloof.

Though Society and the London Press beat vainly at the Prince's door, the Russian, it was presently ascertained, was not wholly inscrutable. Mrs. Jones, indeed, described him as a "jolly ole bloke"; the Countess of Clarges, driving to the Opera with as many of her unmarried daughters as could squeeze in, had stopped the carriage and looked through the dining-room window. There sat Marmoroff eating off golden plates, his serviette tucked into his neck, champagne bottles to right and left of him. It was disgraceful, said the Countess, and ordered her coachman to drive on.

You could see it all quite plainly. Not a blind was drawn, not a curtain, and the room was radiant with a blaze of electric light. There sat the Prince, eating off solid gold or what looked like gold; there were the champagne bottles; and in the background an immense oak sideboard almost hidden by its wealth of plate. A servant dressed in a barbaric livery waited on his Highness. "A Circassian," explained Lady Broadnax, whose husband, Sir Philip, had actually been Ambassador in Petersburg; "all Russian nobles keep them. They are dignified, but very loyal and fierce. A Circassian always sleeps outside the Czar's bed-chamber." Poor Mrs. Jones, to whom no such explanation was vouchsafed, had to content herself with ordinary guesswork. "The man who waits on him looks like an Injian," she said, and brought Mrs. Pepper and Mr. Jones next night to see the show.

Digitized by Google

Only that one vast room was lighted. The rest of Dunster House lay all in gloom. But it made a frame, a dull dark frame, to the brilliant picture it so cunningly enclosed. It was like a scene in a theater, the "house" all blotted and only the stage alight. Mrs. Jones and her friends stood outside the area-railings and watched the play begin.

FIRST is an utter darkness; then the curtain ascends, revealing the "Injian," who, of course, has just switched on the electric lights—bunches and bunches of them. The Injian retires and stands at ease behind his master's chair. It faces the street and, at the moment, is empty. This interval gives the Joneses and Mrs. Pepper time to observe the wealth of golden plate that is massed, arranged, and spread upon the great oak sideboard. Goblets, dishes, platters, bowls, trays and vessels of gold are there, tiers and tiers of them, climbing right up to the Grinling Gibbons ceiling. Of course you can not see whether they are real gold, but they look exactly like it.

These and similar speculations are suddenly arrested, for now the door has opened and Prince Marmoroff himself is on the stage. Tall, erect, beaming, in faultless evening clothes, he moves toward his chair. Mrs. Jones has already done sufficient justice to his exterior. As he sits there, facing the audience, his broad shirt-front and evening coat thrown into relief by the golden background that glows and flashes immediately behind him, he is indeed the "jolly ole bloke" of her description.

Now the Injian relaxes. He goes to the sideboard and returns with an immense flat tray that shines like gold. On it are a dozen saucers, gold as well, from which the Russian makes his choice. Before attacking the contents of the saucers he hurriedly swallows six glasses of what looks like a liqueur. "Vodka," explains Lady Broadnax, who, unlike the Joneses and Mrs. Pepper, is watching him from the balcony of Brissenden House across the square. She lowers her opera-glass and turns to Lady Brissenden: "The things on the saucers—they're *zakuska*—what we call *hors d'œuvres*." A golden soup-tureen and ladle make Mrs. Jones cry, "Oh!" The *blinïs*—it is Lady Broadnax who recognizes the *blinïs*—which Mrs. Jones and her friends mistake for pancakes. But why continue? Why enumerate the detail of a repast such as no one in the square has ever seen eaten there before, served up in a manner which (if the plate be genuine) eclipses even the barbaric opulence of both Belgravias?

It is, in brief, a long repast—Lady Broadnax and her friends count seven courses; and the Prince, in addition to his opening round of vodka, consumes one bottle of claret and two of the best champagne. "My eye!" says Mrs. Jones, when the Russian rises and lights a fat cigar. "Golly!" adds Jones. Lady Broadnax and her friends exclaim, "How dreadful!" The Injian now holds the door for his master who goes out. The Injian is left alone upon the stage. He draws the blinds and curtains, he closes all the shutters; and what he does afterward remains a mystery. The play is over, and everybody can go home.

CHAPTER III

A BAFFLING MYSTERY

LADY BRISSENDEN gave several parties to see the Russian eat his dinner. At the foot of the cards was printed "Marmoroff, 8–9.30." She even had the impertinence to send one of these cards round to Dunster House itself; and, as Lady Broadnax very rightly pointed out, if the Prince had accepted, there would have been no "Marmoroff" at all—at least that night.

The value of the plate and whether it was real gold or silver-gilt or only imitation was discussed in all the newspapers. Most of them said it was silver-gilt; and even then it was calculated that the collection represented a sum running into the six figures. "Russian's Million-Dollar Plate" was cabled over to America, while Great Britain contented itself with a poor hundred-thousand pounds. But the *Planet*, the great society journal with the biggest halfpenny circulation, now assured its readers that the stuff was real gold—"solid gold" was the exact term employed. A representative had been admitted, had seen the marks, had handled it. "Million Pound Service: Marmoroff's Treasure House"—so ran the first two headlines of an impressive column.

The Prince was astonished, and so was the Circassian. Each taxed the other with being the "representative." They learned for the first time that the champagne-cooler weighed exactly a hundredweight, and that an elaborate system of safes, electric bells

Digitized by Google

and man-traps guarded the precious metal overnight. Also that the Circassian, armed with electric torches and magazine pistols, slept, fully dressed, against the strong-room door. Only by crossing his prostrate body could one turn the key. "I wonder who told them that," laughed Prince Marmoroff. "*Ya ne panemayiou*," answered the Circassian.

"It's no good trying to break in there," said Mrs. Jones, a constant reader of the leading journal; "not that me or Jones would ever try; but there are some folks ——" and she wagged her dear old head.

The *Planet* was also the first newspaper to discover the *borzois*. There were six of them, all told, though it was difficult, almost impossible, to know one from another. These great dogs—"the finest breed of Russian wolf-hound" was what the *Planet* called them—now shared their master's dinner and added to the spectacle provided by that nobleman himself, the Circassian servant, and the marvelous gold plate. Mrs. Jones, looking in through the area-railings, Lady Brissenden, and her guests upon the balcony, admired the dogs and agreed with the *Planet's* statement that these had been imported to aid the Circassian in his task of watchman.

It was now reported that the Circassian slept all day and roused himself only toward dusk in time to cook the dinner, to serve it, and to mount guard at his post against the strong-room door. The most varied and ridiculous rumors were afloat about the dogs, the Prince, his faithful servant and the wonderful gold plate. But why consider these? What everybody knew for certain and what could easily and rapidly be verified was:

1. That Dunster House had been let to a Prince Marmoroff;

2. That Prince Marmoroff had no recognizable use for so vast a mansion;

3. That he lived alone in it, the only other occupants being a second foreigner, apparently a servant, and several large dogs who appeared at dinner;

4. That never, under any circumstances, did the Prince entertain;

5. That he always dined alone, almost, as one might say, in public, the servant waiting on him, the dogs in the room. Sometimes there were four or five dogs, sometimes only one or two;

6. That he had the finest service of gold plate (or what looked like gold plate) in London.

Beyond these six particulars, all one knew was that the Prince appeared to enjoy his dinner and that he was a robust man of fifty years or so, florid in appearance, with long gray whiskers and of unusual height. When he rose from the table you saw that he must stand at least six feet four in his stocking feet. Eyes, nose and mouth were of the Slavonic type; the brow was domed and inclined to baldness. Though he ate and drank like the giant he was, no one had ever seen him depart by a hair's breadth from the dignified bearing which marked alike his entry and his exit from the dining-room.

Of the Circassian one could say nothing except that he was a Circassian; the dogs have already been recognized as *borzois* or Russian wolf-hounds; and as to the treasure piled and spread upon the great oak sideboard, we have the *Planet's* assurance that it is solid gold.

CHAPTER IV

THE BURGLARS ARE DECIMATED

THE Burglars' Club in Hatton Garden is a purely professional association, the social needs of the fraternity being amply met by the Senior Burglars in George Street, Hanover Square, and the Junior Burglars in Dean Street, Soho. None of these institutions, it is obvious, is registered under its real designation.

The Hatton Garden club, for instance, is known to police and public as the Miners, its nominal purpose being to afford a place of meeting for gentlemen and others engaged, directly or indirectly, in the mining industry; such term, of course, applying more especially to the precious metals.

In a like symbolic spirit the Juniors are registered as the Treasure-Seekers, and are nominally a body of gentlemen interested in the recovery of hidden treasure. In support of this claim, though in reality further to hoodwink the authorities, they occasionally equip an expedition, which, amid a great flourish of trumpets and abundant references in the Press, goes off to Culebra or some similar spot purporting to be the resting-place of one of the Spanish treasure-ships mysteriously lost four centuries ago. In the Ægean they actually did hoist up a cargo of statuary and bronze ornaments that had lain two thousand years in the body of a foundered trireme; but as the Grecian

Digitized by Google

Government claimed this find (now displayed to advantage in the Museum at Athens), the club received little more than a huge advertisement, and, what was less to the committee's liking, a vast and genuine quantity of applications for membership, which only the suavity, tact and firmness of the secretary prevented from becoming a serious embarrassment.

The Seniors call themselves the Odd Numbers, a title suggested by two celebrated British societies, and, as the initial qualification is that the candidate shall have "done time," and therefore have sported a convict dress and *number*, the inner or esoteric significance of this designation can hardly remain obscure. Even numbers, of course, are admitted, the word "odd" being merely a delicate *jeu d'esprit*, and, incidentally, a sop to the authorities. Press, pulpit and police regard the Odd Numbers as a social and convivial body, linked by the common tie of a deep interest in the higher mathematics. Membership of either the Senior or Junior is tantamount to a collateral membership of the professional institute in Hatton Garden.

At these three addresses, as the astute reader will already have guessed, the sole topic of conversation was Prince Marmoroff's gold plate. Although a General Election was imminent and the fate of the Peers, or more burglarable classes, hung in the balance, the members could talk of nothing else. Burglars, though, however much they may talk in public, invariably work in private. Their profession, more than any other, more even than diplomacy, demands secrecy and caution, and what is known as the "lone hand." They simply can not work in a body. Small groups, of course, may act in concert, but the actual principals are inevitably one, or, at the most, two.

So while everybody at the three clubs was *talking* about the gold plate, it was very difficult to find some one who knew what steps, if any, had been taken toward its removal from Dunster House. That nobody had succeeded in this enterprise was certain; for Marmoroff was dining as usual and the plate was as prominent as ever. Itching Juniors, cropped Seniors, and ordinary Miners stood in the throngs that gathered nightly to see the Russian eat his dinner.

And then a remarkable thing happened. It was at first only whispered in Dean Street; from the Junior it spread to the Senior in George Street, Hanover Square; and at last it was spoken of openly on 'Change, that is to say, at the Burglars' Club in Hatton Garden. Twenty-four of the most popular members were missing, and other members swore that these had attempted Marmoroff's gold plate.

How did they know? Why, they had waited round the corner in their motor-cars, ready to drive the stuff away and melt it down. But no stuff had appeared. They had waited hours; right through the night into the gray of dawn; and after that they had hung about the mansion, hoping against hope, looking for at least a sign.

The only sign they saw was the Circassian. A basket on each arm and accompanied by two of the *borzois*, he had left the house. They followed him and saw him marketing. He paid ready money and took the victuals home himself. He called at the milkman's, the butcher's, the grocer's, and the baker's; he stopped at a fruiterer's and also bought four pounds of cod-cutlets and a lemon sole. He put everything into his baskets; the *borzois* marched on either side of him. At Dunster House he let himself and the dogs in with a key—and that was all. No trace of the gold plate, no rumor of their missing comrades. A dozen or more times the same thing had happened. The burglars had gone to work; the motor-cars had waited vainly round the corner; comrade, friend or partner had nevermore returned. Thus twenty-four good burglars had trickled right away into the unknown.

Nor could any of the missing men be accounted for in the usual way. No mention was made of them in the newspapers. The day's police-court proceedings were scanned, and scanned once more. Not a line about them. Not a single word!

AND others followed. It was horrible. The waiters at the Treasure-Seekers grew haggard from lack of tips; the Odd Numbers was fast becoming a club of Odd Units. In Hatton Garden members were growing so few that anybody could get on the committee or even take a vacant vice-presidency. A resolution was put up and carried that no one should attempt Dunster House. It was to be boycotted, interdicted, excommunicated. Prince Marmoroff was declared an outlaw and placed beyond the pale. No decent

Digitized by Google

burglar was to have anything to do with him or his gold plate.

There is, however, and in spite of a widely quoted proverb to the contrary, no honor among thieves. None at all. If there had been, this drain on the membership of the three clubs would instantly have ceased—always barring the usual casualties, the normal or police detections, an item so trifling as to be almost negligible.

By ones and twos and even threes the membership declined. Sometimes a week passed and all was well. Then, it appeared, a cracksman or two would take heart again. Sometimes, after a period of quiescence, a whole half-dozen would vanish in as many days. Vainly the secretaries sought to fill these gaps by the election of new members. Entrance fees were abolished, subscriptions lowered, the names of proposer and seconder barely scrutinized. It was all no use. The new members were worse than the old ones. Youth and inexperience, no doubt, might account for that. The new members disappeared like flies.

And still the great oak sideboard gleamed with its tiers of golden plate; still Marmoroff ate his seven courses; still Lady Brissenden gave her parties; still Mrs. Jones looked through the area-rails; and still the huge *borzois*—less lean than formerly—played round their master's chair or merely squatted on the Turkey carpet or the Persian rug.

Late in June the Treasure-Seekers, the Odd Numbers and the Miners spoke of amalgamation. The upkeep of three separate clubs was proving too much for their attenuated ranks. In June, also, the watchers of the feast—the riffraff in the street outside, the select few bidden to Lady Brissenden's balcony—discovered a new feature in this nightly entertainment. A third character had been added to the cast.

Looking through her opera-glass, Lady Brissenden—she enjoyed the finest point of view and therefore her account is the most complete and trustworthy—looking through her opera-glass, Lady Brissenden had discovered a second menial. He was dressed like the Circassian, but he was obviously English. His clumsiness when waiting at table was alone sufficient to betray his nationality; and, moreover, he had an outstanding pigeon-breast. That is to say, instead of a hump between his shoulder-blades he had one next to his collar-bones. It was more of a birth-mark than an actual deformity; indeed, it gave him a supermartial air that was no ways in keeping with his mild and rabbit-like countenance. This newcomer was as one who not only "throws a chest" but keeps it there indefinitely when thrown.

His duty, as observed from Lady Brissenden's balcony, was to assist the Circassian and bring the things up from the kitchens below. In his long *saftan* with silver belt and cartridge-cases, the latter displayed against his pigeon-breast, he was at least presentable. Mrs. Jones thought so, too, and so did Mrs. Pepper. The burglars felt that here was a new adversary, though possibly, being English, he might be bribed into an effective collaboration. They, also, it appeared, had no doubts as to the newcomer's nationality.

This bribery, however, was more easily proposed than effected; for it was presently discovered that the man never left the house, not even to see his sweetheart or go marketing. How, therefore, approach him? Overtures, made in writing and posted in the usual way, were one and all ignored. But what could be expected, seeing that they were merely directed to "The English Manservant," and marked "Private"? The fellow's name defied all ruse and subterfuge.

Subsequently it transpired that the newcomer had been christened "Adam Newman." And, "very appropriately and rightly," agreed everybody who heard of it.

CHAPTER V

ADAM NEWMAN DRIVES A BARGAIN

THE story of Adam Newman's engagement by the Prince, the history of his whole period of service at Dunster House, reads like a romance, and probably is one.

Adam, a simple country bumpkin adorned with a pigeon-breast, an attraction for which neither he nor his mother could justly be held responsible, had for several months been engaged in the hawking of fruit and vegetables, in which commerce he was assisted by an industrious horse and cart. This hardworking trio, however, had latterly fallen on evil days. Twice the wetness of the season had ruined their stock of soft goods, strawberries especially, of which Adam had laid in a large quantity, going to rack and ruin. A collision with a motor-

Digitized by Google

bus had completed the list of Adam's misfortunes. The cart had been upset, a fine lot of cauliflowers ground to an unsaleable pulp, and Adam himself contused and shaken. As he was clearly on the wrong side of the road at the time, having turned a busy corner in a brown study, he had no shadow of claim against the omnibus company.

He picked himself up a ruined man. The horse, though astonished and dubious as to what would happen next, was fortunately uninjured. A willing wheelwright soon repaired the cart. This operation cost Adam his last halfpenny. Credit, or common tick, he had none. He was unacquainted with the routine of banking-houses, nor would any pawnbroker accept so unwieldy a pledge as a horse and cart.

Besides, Adam wanted the horse and cart for his own purposes. How else recover the ground and prestige he had lost? Without these adjuncts, he was a mere tramp. With them, he could embark on enterprises. For instance, it was he who removed the Joneses to South Audley Street, their stay in Grosvenor Gardens having proved shorter than they had anticipated. But this was only an Indian Summer. After that job followed a long period of unemployment, sufficiently serious to reduce the circumstances of Adam's pigeon-breast.

Why, the intelligent reader will ask, did Mrs. Jones not immediately recognize in the Circassian's auxiliary the young man who had recently removed her from Grosvenor Gardens? Surely, with such an aid to recognition as the feature already described and so coarsely dwelt upon by the narrator, she should have known at once. Lady Brissenden, thus removed, would surely have done so, to say nothing of Lady Broadnax and the Marchioness of Wye. But the lower classes, and especially their ladies, have minds that soar above such trifles and observe nothing that is not immediately below their noses. It is, of course, possible that Adam's Circassian outfit hid him from the searching eye of Mrs. Jones—but, at the moment, we are occupied with Adam's misfortunes and not with that kind woman's lamentable deficiencies.

It was during the most doleful hour of his life that Bernard Bean approached him with a brand new sovereign. "There's four more as good as this waiting for you," said Bean, "if you do as I tell you." Naturally Adam was all ears, and promised to do anything that Bean commanded. What Bean told him was to be round the corner next to Dunster House in Belgrave Square at one A. M. the following night. Bean did not, of course, mention Dunster House, but he was explicit about the corner and the Square.

"Write it down," answered Adam; "I'll see whether I can find it."

Bean, surprised at meeting such a fool—a fool, moreover, who, unlike most fools, was at no pains to conceal the fact—tore a leaf out of his pocket-book and began to write.

"Capitals," said Adam; "I can't read nor't but them;" and Bean started all over again with capitals. For a moment he looked suspiciously at Adam. No, the fellow couldn't be a detective in disguise. "I'll tell you what," he proposed; "we'll drive there now. You keep your eyes open, and you'll be able to find it again."

Following his new friend's directions, Adam took the reins, and it was not long before they reached Dunster House and drew up at the "corner" mentioned in Bean's proposition. The few remarks that passed upon the road were sufficient to convince Adam that Bernard, for all his fine clothes, wasn't a real gentleman; while Bernard felt that Adam's ignorance and born idiocy were impossible within the four-mile radius. Before they separated, however, Bean repeated his instructions and made fresh mention of the other four pounds that hung to them. Adam was to be in waiting here at one A. M., the following night. His horse and cart must be with him, the horse to be well fed and ready to go at its swiftest pace. The cart was to be empty.

"Right-o," answered Adam, and drove off to break into the brand new sovereign. "I'll be there," he shouted, "you can bet your boots!"

BEAN did not bet his boots, but went off, congratulating himself on having discovered so soft and unsuspecting a collaborator. A taxicab now took him westward, where he had an important engagement with a fellow-burglar. These two scoundrels lunched together at the Treasure-Seekers, to which institution they had recently been admitted, although, as the Secretary said, they were no class; but how, with Dunster House uncracked, could he afford to pick and choose? "They haven't

Digitized by Google

even got a motor-car!" he had ended; and, as we have seen, the assertion was justified, for did not Bean propose, instead, to utilize a very ordinary horse and cart? Hired, too, and not even his own! Lately, however, the membership of the three clubs, now reduced to one common Secretary—they could no longer afford a Secretary apiece—had sunk to a level that threatened bankruptcy, and they positively welcomed such riffraff as that bounder, Bernard Bean.

The following night at one A. M. Adam was waiting round the corner. He was punctual, but Bean was a half-hour late. Bean explained this by observing that his partner had disappointed him. "I know what's happened," said Bean; "he's tried to get his blow in first."

What Bean meant was that his partner had betrayed him, and had last night attempted Dunster House upon his own account. Unsuccessfully, beyond a doubt; for Bean had watched Prince Marmoroff eat his dinner; and there had stood the gold plate, tempting as ever, glittering, shining—it gave Bean a pain in his inside to think of it. Burglars are like that. That's why they burgle. Five hours ago Bean had actually seen the gold plate with his own eyes; and not a piece had been removed. He had not seen his partner since yesterday's luncheon. That blackguard, apparently, had disappeared like the rest of them. "Thought he'd cut me out!" cried Bernard Bean.

The cracksman's eloquence and also his denunciations were thrown away on Adam, and likewise on the horse and cart. But when the other said, "Why don't you join in with me? There's twenty golden sovereigns if we pull it off," Adam pricked up his ears and felt that now at last was an opportunity of paying the money he owed at his lodgings, and, what was vastly more important, embarking once more upon his trade of itinerant greengrocer. With twenty golden sovereigns he would be a prince. Otherwise it was a measly offer, and well Bean knew it.

"Make it twenty-five," said Adam, who, like all yokels, felt that without a friendly haggling no bargain was complete. There was, however, no time for parleyings, and Bean agreed at once.

"I'll have the five now," said Adam.

"Curse you!" answered Bean. "You've had one on account—here's another four." It was practically all the money Bernard had about him; but sufficient time had already been lost, and if he didn't hasten he felt that some other burglar might turn up and queer his pitch. "That's all you'll get till this job's over and done with," he now added; "and if you try to bolt I'll call the police."

"I'm your man," cried Adam, whom a hasty inspection had convinced that the money paid over was genuine and of full weight. He stowed it carefully away, and dropped once more into the servile attitude that people of his stock and origin so readily assume.

"We'll have to leave the horse and cart. Do you think she'll stay?" asked Bernard Bean.

"If I put her nosebag on she'll stay all night," replied Adam.

"Well, put it on."

Adam obeyed; and presently the mare was munching away as only a mare can munch at that hour of the night—or, was it morning?

The two men turned the corner and were now face to face with Dunster House. As everybody knows, it is a detached house, though boasting nothing that by any stretch of the imagination might be called a garden.

A policeman passed, flashing his bull's-eye across the front of the great mansion.

"That's good—there won't be another copper for seventeen minutes," whispered Bean; "we'll be inside by then."

The policeman disappeared.

"I go first and you follow me," whispered Bean, as they sneaked past the area-railings.

"I'm game," replied Adam; and game he was.

Soon they were in the narrow passage which separates Dunster House from its left-hand neighbor. Now they could make a tour of the house and find its weakest, and, therefore, its most vulnerable spot.

"I've got some poisoned beefsteak for them dogs," said Bean, meaning the *borzois*.

Adam didn't know what dogs, nor did he care. All he wanted was the twenty pounds that would come to him when it was over, and he looked no further than that.

CHAPTER VI

THE FATE OF BERNARD BEAN

BEAN had reconnoitered and had at last decided on a basement window, the only one he could find that was unprotected by iron bars. The diamond on his finger and

Digitized by Google

a practised hand removed the best part of a pane of glass and turned the catch; and then a low growl from within made Bernard jump, a movement which, unwittingly, betrayed his lack of caste, and his fundamental unsuitability for so strenuous and nerve-racking a profession. He recovered himself, however, and produced the poisoned meat. This he threw in at the window, allowing the dog or dogs time to eat and perish.

Now all was quiet in the house. Bean pressed the button of his electric torch and looked into the room. He had not switched on this implement before, for fear the dogs should fly at the light, bark their loudest, and alarm, not only the house, but all Belgravia. The room, apparently an unused larder, was empty; a dead *borzoi* lay on the floor. "Capital!" whispered Bean, and threw open the window. A moment more, and the two men were inside.

Bean's next object was to find the staircase that led up to the dining-room; and if the gold plate was not there, he must discover the Prince and the Circassian and drug them in their sleep. He was ready to go to any lengths, short of murder; in his capacious pockets he had chloroform, two pistols and a knife; and, naturally, a complete house-breaker's outfit, as supplied by the best makers.

They were tiptoeing their way through the unused larder when Adam suddenly slipped up on something soft. Bean was furious. "You'll have everybody down here if you make that row!" he said, shaking with suppressed rage, fear and anger.

"It's that piece o' steak yer threw in—I'm sure it is," responded Adam; "and if yer talk ter me like that, I'll go straight home ag'in."

"*Sssshl*" hissed Bean; and Adam *sssshed*. The *borzoi* had not stirred; yet Adam felt that it was breathing.

A locked door was the next obstacle; but Bean's pincers soon found the key and twisted it. "My, you are a chap!" cried Adam, as the door swung open, revealing a passage that led to a back staircase. The burglar's eyes lit up. In another minute he would be on his way to the dining-room. "Show me how yer did it?" asked Adam, lingering, for he had never seen any one twist a key that way before. The burglar turned on him savagely. "Stop playing the fool," he answered, "or else I'll bash you!"

"*You* bash *me!*" replied Adam. "I'd like to see yer do it!"

Heavens! It was hopeless. How could he expect to succeed with such an ally? Bean felt this to the bottom of his soul. "I'll tell you what," he answered, controlling himself; "I'm going on alone, and you'll wait here for me. You'll do more harm than good if you go any further. You can't keep your mouth shut."

"Nor can you—look at yer now!"

This interruption had come from Adam Newman. Bean disregarded it. With admirable calmness he continued: "You'll wait for me here. I'll be back again with a load in half a jiffy. You'll take charge till I come back with another. Just you sit tight and wait for me."

"All right," began Adam; "as long as yer don't call names, an' as long as I gets my twenty poun'——"

Bean cut him short with a swift, "You'll get it," and disappeared down the passage that led to the back-staircase, which Adam soon heard him mounting two steps at a time.

Adam, left to himself, kept his ears open and waited patiently till all at once, from overhead, a horrible crackling sound startled him and set his teeth on edge. A dull thud followed. "Phew!" he whistled; and then he felt something sniffing close behind him. He clapped a hand to the seat of his unmentionables—and encountered the cold and clammy muzzle of a dog! It must be a dog—the one they had left for dead. He found his matches and struck a light. The great *borzoi* was glaring at him and ready to spring. "I've had enough o' this," said Adam. "Twenty poun' or no twenty poun', I'm a-goin' home."

For a moment he considered his duty toward his employer; but that horrible crackling sound, taken in conjunction with the dull thud that had followed, was pretty convincing. "They've done for him, right enough; and they'll do for me if I don't take myself off again. Out of the way, Fido!" the last was uttered aloud and addressed to the dog.

The *borzoi* did not stir. Adam went forward. The wolf-hound gave one long low growl, then sprang at him and bore him down. Only Adam's pigeon-breast prevented the beast from finding his throat. In that awful darkness Adam struggled for dear life. To and fro they rocked; the seconds seemed like hours; the *borzoi* was baffled, puzzled, and nonplussed. Then lights appeared suddenly, a voice called the *borzoi* off, and Adam sat up to encounter the

Digitized by Google

massive form and florid countenance of a giant whom the reader will instantly recognize as Prince Marmoroff.

ADAM, blinking and blinded by the light, gazed round and wondered. So did the Prince—till at last his eyes took in the irregularity which had so baffled and beaten the *borzoi*. He burst into a peal of laughter and, turning to the man who stood immediately behind him and whom the sagacious reader instantly spots as the Circassian, "*Vazmojhna-li?*" he cried, and burst into a second peal, louder and merrier than the one that had gone before.

The Circassian, who was holding five of the great hounds in leash, made no reply. He looked fiercely at Adam, as though ready and eager to set the dogs on him at any moment. Adam seized upon this respite to wipe the perspiration from his brow; for all this was rather more than he was used to—a good deal more.

"Get up," commanded the Prince, "and stand still while we search you."

"D'ye mean me?" enquired Adam.

"Whom else could I mean?" The Prince was all politeness.

Adam rose to his feet, and, while the Prince held the dogs in check, the Circassian searched him.

They took from him an old clay pipe with a broken stem, a twist of shag, a box of Swedish matches, three halfpence in copper, five and sixpence in silver, and Bean's four sovereigns. The fellow hadn't so much as a pocket-knife! "You with the pigeon-breast," cried Marmoroff, "what on earth made you come here?"

"He asked me to," responded Adam.

"But you're not a burglar."

"Me a burglar!" cried Adam; "Lor' bless yer, I sells fruit an' vegetables. There's my cart an' my ole mare a-waitin' for me roun' the corner."

"It seems to me that I'm the burglar," replied the Prince, and ordered the Circassian to return Adam's money, tobacco and other articles. This ceremony accomplished, he led the way to the back staircase. "Follow me," he commanded; but Adam hesitated. His Highness smiled. "You need fear nothing at present," he said, "but when Popoff returns, beware!" Popoff, evidently, was the Circassian. Then, addressing himself directly to that fierce retainer, the Prince continued in a foreign tongue.

The Circassian, who, by the way, was not a Circassian, but a Don Cossack, listened incredulously and then went out. Adam, the Prince and the *borzois* were left alone.

Up-stairs they went, Adam looking nervously around him for traces of the vanished Bean, the dogs at his heels, the Prince leading. They crossed a corridor, turned to the right, and presently Marmoroff showed the way into a large and comfortably-furnished sitting-room. He lit a cigarette and took a chair, motioning Adam to a place beside him. The six *borzois* had squatted themselves upon the floor.

"Now tell me your story," commanded the Prince, "and how it was that you entered my house in this fashion."

Adam unfolded his story, every word of it, and it was evident that the Prince believed him. They were interrupted by the return of the Circassian.

The servant said what he had to say. The Prince turned once more to Adam.

"Popoff confirms your story," he observed. "The horse and cart are now safely locked up in my stables, and——" Prince Marmoroff had suddenly brought his discourse to a close, for from the adjacent landing there sounded the muffled tinkling of an electric bell. "Good heavens, another burglar!" he exclaimed. "We are really getting far more than we want. Leo!"

At this last word one of the *borzois* bestirred itself and hastened down-stairs to growl a little and pretend that it had eaten the poisoned meat and perished.

"That's a trained dog o' yourn?" asked Newman. But neither the Prince nor the Circassian answered him. Without a word they seized him by the scruff and bundled him into a room far down the corridor. Here the Circassian stuffed a dirty pocket-handkerchief into his mouth while the Prince completed his extinction. They closed a door on him and turned the key. A few minutes later he heard the horrible crackling sound that set his teeth on edge. The dull thud followed.

CHAPTER VII

THE BURGLARS TAKE A DESPERATE RESOLVE

THE Secretary of the three clubs, though glad to be rid of Bean, could not but view with apprehension this further shrinkage of an already attenuated membership.

Digitized by Google

If things went on like this, he reflected, soon there would be no clubs and, certainly, no Secretary. Othello's occupation would be gone. He thought of the two ex-Secretaries whose places he now filled. Cast upon the world—and a nice mess they had made of it! Both in jail, with genteel wives and families blushing for them and lying about "father"! He shuddered as he thought of them. No, whatever happened, he would never resume the practise of his old profession. Long years of security, coupled with a respected and honorable employment, had rendered it hateful. And, besides, he was grown too old for anything like success, and far too stout. He consulted his wife, and also their eldest daughter. They both agreed with him. It was time to call an extraordinary collective general meeting of the three clubs and decide upon some measure that would settle Dunster House for good and always.

The meeting was called—there was no difficulty about that. It sat in Hatton Garden at the Miner's. The discussion began at eight P. M. (so as to give such members as had been at work a good night's rest), and was adjourned at twelve, midnight (so as not to interfere too seriously with the pursuit of business). The next evening the debate continued.

It had been proposed to blow up Dunster House, to set it on fire, to raid it; but, as the Chairman very rightly pointed out, a fire might spread to the rest of Belgrave Square, injuring many of their best clients; and as to the other suggestions, they would attract such notice from the police that they could hardly be entertained, unless some half-dozen volunteers were ready to venture, and if need be, perish in the good cause. Heaven knew, said the Chairman, a veteran who had three times been elected President of the Odd Numbers—heaven knew, he repeated, what dangers lurked within the house itself! And, really, the police would never permit a private raid in London. They might, of course, be induced to raid the place themselves.

"But how?" shrieked a round dozen of the company.

The Chairman ignored this interruption. Unperturbed, immovable, he continued: "If we blow the house up, it'll be the end of us. Scotland Yard won't stand it, and sooner or later they'll get upon our tracks. Some one is sure to blab——"

"Never!" cried a score of angry voices.

"I've been in the profession over fifty years—you all remember my jubilee," pursued the veteran.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"I've been in the profession over fifty years, and I can not recall a year in which some one hasn't blabbed—owned up, given names and full particulars. The prison system—the low diet, the lack of exercise, the horrible solitude and the consequent desire for a little excitement—may account for it, but facts are facts," insisted the Chairman, wagging his close-cropped head. "A man nabbed for a small thing will give away a big thing. I've done it myself—and so have most of you."

The burglars could not deny it.

AT THEIR second meeting the Secretary himself submitted a proposal. "It was my daughter's suggestion——" he began.

"Never mind your daughter," interposed the Chairman; "stick to the point!"

"Only a woman's delicate intuition—" protested the secretary.

"Delicate what?" thundered the Chairman.

"Intuition—the way women jump at things—it's a gift of theirs." The Secretary was trying his hardest to explain.

"Well, what of it?" demanded the other, bridling. And then: "Either you've got a plan or you haven't—and there's an end of it. We don't want to hear about your daughter. I've got six of my own, married and single, and——"

"*Let's engage Wendell Oliver!*" The Secretary's voice had risen high above the Chairman's, drowning it, submerging it, as he repeated that simple yet so unexpected climax. "*Let's engage Wendell Oliver!*" he yelled; and now the name of the great detective was on the lips of every burglar in that room.

"Order!" stormed the Chairman; and, when quiet was restored, "Now that's sense," he admitted.

"None of *your* daughters would have thought of it," cried the triumphant Secretary, "married or single!"

"I never discuss business matters with my womenfolk. Women are notoriously unsafe." And, having administered this well-merited rebuke, the veteran pondered. "Yes, it must be Wendell Oliver," he muttered at last. "Is everybody agreed?"

Digitized by Google

There followed a show of the most skilful hands in London, maybe in the world. The Secretary's daughter's plan was carried by two hundred and eighty-seven to one.

"I don't think much of Oliver," objected the singleton.

"He spotted you first shot," was the crushing retort.

It was true. The great detective had handled this particular case and solved it before the other could glue on his easiest fitting suit of whiskers. There is no need to repeat the story; "The Mystery of the Glazier's Diamond" is its title, and the reader will find it in a back number of one of our most popular magazines.

The dissentient sulked, recalling how Oliver's skill had cost him seven good years and an unexpired ticket-of-leave; the other members cried, "By Jove!" and voted the Secretary's daughter a new cloth costume and as many chocolate creams as she could lift unaided. And, furthermore, it was decided that the Secretary should approach Oliver, close with him at once, if possible, and the fee might be anything up to three hundred guineas.

"Get him for less if you can; but don't exceed three hundred," was the Chairman's final word. "Remind him of his obligation to ourselves. If we disappear, then he goes down with us. Put it that way. Appeal to his public spirit at first, and then to his self-interest."

So they settled it. The Secretary was to wait on Wendell Oliver, state the case, and secure his services for a sum that was not to exceed the figure mentioned.

CHAPTER VIII

WENDELL OLIVER, THE GREAT DETECTIVE

THE great detective was not only at home when the Secretary called, but evidently expecting some such visitor.

"You've come to see me about the burglars," he began; "those that have disappeared in attempting Dunster House. You want to know what's happened to them, and how to put an end to it."

"How on earth could you tell!" exclaimed the other, completely taken by surprise.

The great detective smiled. "It's perfectly simple. You sent up your card. Of course I know the Miners and its true character. You are its Secretary. You are also Secretary to the Treasure-Seekers and the Odd Numbers. Such an official as yourself, in view of the recent lamentable drain upon the membership of the three clubs, could call here with only one object. You are empowered to offer me three hundred guineas."

The Secretary gasped.

"Three clubs, at one hundred guineas apiece—my usual fee—makes three hundred," explained Oliver. "Your check is in the breast-pocket of your morning coat—on the left-hand side.

"Wrong!" cried the Secretary.

"Well, what's that bulge—sure it isn't the check-book?"

"It's the thing I make out the members' receipts with."

"Then you've brought bank-notes."

The Secretary was flabbergasted.

"How——" he began; but Oliver was again to the fore with one of his pellucid explanations.

"You haven't brought a check-book," he had interposed; "my terms—spot cash before I move so much as a little finger—are perfectly well known; and so——" The great detective had finished his sentence with the familiar, and more than familiar, gesture.

The Secretary cleared his throat.

"A-hem," he began; but Oliver was too quick for him.

"You are about to remind me," observed this arch-bluffer genially, "that you are offering me the chance of a lifetime, the biggest *coup* in my career, and that, therefore, I should undertake this job at a reduction."

"Quite right," admitted the Secretary; for, with all his objections, reservations and subterfuges anticipated in this cruel way, what else *could* he reply?

"And if that doesn't succeed, you'll urge that I can't get along without you, that we stand or fall together, that if you disappear——"

"Our Chairman's very words!" muttered the Secretary.

"In short, you want me to take less than the three hundred."

"Quite right," repeated the other.

"Well, I won't!" snapped the great detective; and before that basilisk eye and intonation the Secretary quailed.

Oliver, however, was not all rapacity; and, having scored his main point, could afford to continue in a lighter key.

"Things have been so infernally dull

Digitized by Google

lately," he now pursued, "what with all you fellows getting into Dunster House and never coming out again, that I'm absolutely stoney. Tradespeople waiting, overdrawn at the bank—tell your members that—and hand over the three hundred."

With a profound and bitter sigh the Secretary produced five twenties, four fifties, and three fives. He had split the money up into these convenient fractions so as to be ready with any of the lesser sums they might agree upon. But no such struggle had been possible. Oliver had cut the ground from under his feet. In later years, when writing his memoirs, he dwelt especially upon this episode. "Even the Secretary of a burglars' club," he confesses, "is no match for a really great detective."

Oliver had gone to a small iron safe, which he opened with the key that dangled from his watch-chain.

"Put the money in there," he ended, "and —and, er—call again in about a week."

The Secretary stood out for at least a receipt; and, "All right," said Oliver.

Armed with this document, and lighter by three hundred golden guineas, the visitor now returned to his office in Hatton Garden and prepared to draw up a full and exhaustive report of all that had passed between him and the great detective.

CHAPTER IX

ADAM NEWMAN THROWS A BOOT

THERE are certain persons who insist that Adam Newman's stay in Dunster House was three parts compulsory and only one part voluntary and agreed. But we have Adam's own word for it that he remained, firstly out of consideration for the horse and cart, and secondly because the wages were good, the place an easy one. He himself has told us how the Prince, rousing him next morning with a kick, offered to engage him there and then, previously laying down a list of rules, which he would have to accept—there was no alternative. Many people suppose that Adam was hypnotized; and this hypothesis seems very likely. The Prince was capable of much, and hypnotism, we are now aware, was not the least of his accomplishments. A rustic, like Adam, would be an easy subject. But let us hear, or, rather, elucidate, that hero's own account of what happened next to him.

He had been offered twenty-five pounds for the night's work. Five pounds had been paid him on account; twenty were still to come. His employer had disappeared midway, mysteriously, leaving no trace; and Adam himself, if we include the great *borzois* under that category, was now in the clutches of several ferocious foreigners. So was his horse, and so was his cart. Moreover, he had been caught trespassing on what was evidently private property. He knew that it was in the Prince's power to hand him over to the police, who would pass him on to the nearest magistrate, who would, at the least, curtail his liberty.

He felt that he, for his part, might make it unpleasant for the Prince, but how, exactly, he couldn't quite say, and gentlemen —so his rustic experience taught him—always let each other down easily. The Prince was sure to be a gentleman—Adam could spot them half a mile away. So was the magistrate. He wouldn't have an earthly chance against them. For the present he would take whatever Fate sent him, and trust to Providence, as in his youth he had been enjoined to do.

The Prince knew his story, and also his name and occupation.

"I want a second servant," said the Prince, "and if you keep the place, in twenty weeks you can leave this house with twenty-five pounds in your pockets and take your horse and cart with you—just as you proposed doing last night. I will pay you a pound a week on certain conditions. They are difficult. Otherwise,"—and the Prince's frown made Adam's blood run cold —"otherwise you will be given to the *borzois!*"

"D'yer mean them dogs?" asked Adam.

"You have understood me," replied the Prince. "If you are reasonable I will put a pound aside for you every week. When twenty weeks have expired I will give you the money, and you will be free to go. Just as you had intended—except for this short delay. Five months—barely five months—it is not a long time in the life of a young man. We need assistance. Popoff has too much work."

"That's the feller what dresses like a woman?" asked Adam.

"He wears his native costume—like your Highlanders," replied his Highness.

"D'yer want me ter sit up all night?" was Adam's next question.

Digitized by Google

"We most particularly want you to be in bed. You will have to work in the daytime. But if you are anxious to get the twenty pounds and your horse and cart, you must engage yourself not to leave this house for twenty weeks; you must engage yourself not to hold communication with the outside world for twenty weeks; you will have to live here exactly as though you, Popoff, and myself were on a desert island."

"Like Robinson Crusoe," said Adam.

"Precisely. Like Robinson Crusoe," replied the Prince. "When your twenty weeks have expired you will be rescued by a passing ship. I see you understand me. And to pursue the simile, you can return once more to your native land, twenty-five pounds in your pockets, your horse and cart intact. Do you close with this offer?"

"It's a fair 'un," said Adam, to whom the prospect of realizing his cherished dream appealed with some violence. Five months from now he would load up with celery, spinach, turnips, sprouts and 'taters. Apples 'd be over, but oranges 'd be coming in, and there was always bananas to fill up with.

The Prince interrupted this brown study. It was much the same kind of reverie that had led to Adam's collision with the motor-bus.

"Of course we feed you and give you your livery. You will be dressed like Popoff, excepting the dagger."

"But in twenty weeks I can clear out," responded Adam; "and I'll have twenty poun' wages to me name an' ready for me?"

The Prince nodded.

"I can go where I like an' do as I like—an' comin' in here an' bein' found trespassin' won't be held up against me?"

"You have my word for that."

"An' yer'll give me back my horse an' cart?"

"Certainly."

"An' what about the old mare bein' fed an' gettin' exercise?"

"I guarantee both."

"Fair's fair," said Adam; "I'm yer man. I'll do it." And that very same morning saw him polishing Prince Marmoroff's gold plate till he could see his face in it.

THE next day, attired exactly like Popoff, excepting the dagger, he waited at table or brought the things up from the kitchen piping hot. He had his own room and the run of four rooms in the front part of the basement. The rest of the house was a sealed book to him and was forbidden. Well, he didn't mind. There was twenty pounds a-coming to him with the Winter, after the manuring and plowing and the sowing and the fall o' the leaves. The horse and cart were in the stable and safe and saving up for him. If he only did as he was bid, he'd find all London waiting for him and the finest stock of greens that money could buy.

Once or twice he woke up in the night and fancied he heard the horrible crackling sound that set his teeth on edge. "Seventeen more weeks," said Adam drowsily; then turned round on his side and went to sleep again.

It was during the fourth week that he threw a boot at one of the *borzois*. The hound had come into Adam's pantry with what looked like the Sunday joint between its teeth.

"Drop it!" cried Adam, and threw the boot.

There followed a crashing of broken glass. He had missed the dog and hit the window.

The *borzoi*, long and lean and elegant, slipped with its booty through the iron bars, thence out into Belgravia and the unknown.

Adam turned to meet the fierce glare of the Circassian, the still more terrible eye of Prince Marmoroff.

"You broke a window and let the dog escape?" demanded the latter.

"He come in here with a joint he'd stole from the larder—so I threw a boot at him to make him drop it."

"He escaped?" thundered the Prince.

"He got through them bars," and then, encouraged by the awful silence, "why don't you keep a sensible sized dog like a retriever? These here greyhounds'll git through anything."

"He took the—the er, joint with him?" interrupted the Prince.

"Got clean away with it."

The Prince did not wait to hear more, but, summoning the Circassian, left Adam to sweep up the broken glass and wonder why these men, ordinarily so cool, should be thus desperately put out by such a trifle.

"I suppose them's prize dogs," he concluded, "an' raw meat don't agree wi' 'em."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

THE DETECTIVE DOES SOMETHING

WENDELL OLIVER, the great detective, sat in his study and read the *Sporting Star*. He was undecided whether he should put a five-pound note on Pharaoh's Daughter, or merely back her for a place. The *Star's* tipster advised a place and gave good reasons; the owner, however, who had just looked in on business, had given better ones and said, "I'm putting my shirt on her; it's a dead snip." Oliver was debating what reliance could be placed on the word of this particular owner when his servant announced the Secretary of the three clubs.

"That bore!" said Oliver. "Tell him I'm out."

"Well, sir, I think I said you were in."

"Tell him you were mistaken—and close the door."

The servant vanished, and Oliver resumed his speculations. He went to the window and watched the crestfallen Secretary depart.

"I bet some more of his members have disappeared—that's a dead snip, anyway," observed the great detective, and poured himself out a second glass of cider. It was thirsty weather, and cider was his stand-by when in doubt.

"I'll back her both ways," he concluded, striding to the writing-table and filling in a wire. The servant was despatched with it; the great detective returned to his seat, his cider and his newspaper.

Towards noon he took a constitutional, lounged in the Park, sauntered down Grosvenor Place; and so to Belgrave Square. On the way he pondered.

This Dunster House business was rather too much for him. He couldn't solve it. It would have to solve itself. Little did the great detective dream that, practically at that moment, it was in the very throes of a solution.

His deductions were all pretty stale by now; but, nevertheless, he repeated them. Perhaps there was some flaw, something that had escaped him and escaped again—the keenest brain suffers these lapses. It was no good watching Dunster House by night or even entering it—so reasoned Oliver. The night was fatal. For then the inmates stood on the alert, and he—should he venture—would probably share the fate of those who had disappeared. He had no wish to disappear. And, granted that he took every precaution, how could he hope to succeed where the keenest burglars in the world had failed? Not only Englishmen, be it observed, but Frenchmen, Germans, Americans, Belgians had all succumbed to the lure of Prince Marmoroff's gold plate. The inmates were acting very sensibly; whatever their game, no one who entered the house by night would have the nerve to accuse them publicly. Evidently they counted on this. No, pursued Oliver, *the one chance of probing the mystery was to get into Dunster House by day.*

The odds were in your favor. If the inmates were human, as probably they were, they must sleep. For they couldn't be up all night and all day as well. That was impossible. The logic of this argument was unshakeable. The only flaw in it was that *you couldn't get into Dunster House by day.* It seemed easy enough to get into the place by night, as easy as it was difficult to get out again. But by day—nobody would answer the front-door bell, for both it and the knocker had been removed. And whatever you did, a dog was sure to give the alarm. He himself had set them barking several times.

Of course there *were* a few legitimate though humble ways of getting in what one might call the thin edge of the wedge. For instance, he had disguised himself as a dustman and tried his luck that way. He had got no further than being forced to remove a cartload of refuse—a beastly job!—from the dusthole; and there was nothing very remarkable about that. The Circassian servant had superintended this operation and given him tuppence for himself; and the Circassian either would not or could not talk anything but Russian. He, Oliver, had been glad to get away.

His other disguises had proved equally ineffective; nor had he been able to communicate with the pigeon-breasted and, presumably, English domestic whom one saw bringing in the gold dishes and waiting so abominably at table. And it was impossible to go to the house and say one was this menial's long lost brother, or a lawyer with tidings of a fortune left him by a great-aunt who had passed away intestate in the wilds of Arizona, simply because one did not know the idiotic creature's name.

From the house itself Oliver had turned

Digitized by Google

to other and less secret sources. He had elicited the fact that the Prince's belongings had arrived, presumably from Russia, packed in immense crates and cases that weighed quite enormously. The contents of these packages had never been divulged. They were delivered at the house, and that was all one knew about them. Of course the gold plate—the metal weighs more heavily than almost any other—might account for something; and there was the great oak sideboard—but six vanloads!—no, they would hardly account for six.

And ordinary furniture? Considering that the bulk of the house seemed unoccupied, and that, apart from the dining-room, only four of the other rooms ever showed a light, why should Marmoroff furnish apartments that were not in use and that he had not enough servants to maintain? No, it was not furniture that had been taken into the house, nor works of art, nor anything possessed by ordinary households. Well, what was it? Oliver gave up that.

His second discovery, and hardly a particularly new one, was that all the shopping for Dunster House was done by the Circassian, who paid in ready money for everything he bought, and, more often than not, read out the names of the goods from a slip of paper.

One curious circumstance there was about this daily round. It was certain that till recently the Circassian, accompanied by two of the *borzois*, had gone on foot. Now he drove, or, sometimes, only rode. He had acquired a very ordinary London cart and an altogether absurd old mare. On the cart, and in conformity with the law, was painted the owner's—most probably the previous owner's—name. "Adam Newman," it said. "Who was Adam Newman?" asked Oliver; and had this been Russia instead of England, he would not have had to ask in vain. But, unfortunately, this was England, where police and public have as little to do with one another as possible, excepting servant-girls, who do not count. Thinking these thoughts, which he had thought so many times before, the great detective entered Belgrave Square.

IT WAS the very moment in which Adam had thrown the boot and smashed the window; the very moment in which the *borzoi* had escaped with what Adam fondly imagined to be the Sunday joint. The dog had landed safely in the Square, and was making straight in the direction of Wendell Oliver. So was the Circassian, who had started hot-foot in pursuit.

Oliver looked up and saw them coming.

"Now or never is my chance!" he cried. "I must stop the dog, hand it over to the Circassian, and after that—well, anything may happen." So saying, he took up a stragetic position on the pavement and calmly awaited the arrival of the great *borzoi*.

A passing policeman guessed his intention, and stayed to see the fun. Other idlers joined this nucleus. For an instant Oliver fancied that one or other of them might intercept the dog and ruin everything; but one glance at their craven faces was enough —*they* would never venture!

He was full in the *borzoi's* path. It swerved as it approached him. He swerved too, making for its collar. The dog's wit and cunning were matched against his own, but luckily it seemed set on retaining its ill-gotten loot. A feint, and it turned again. He was too quick for it. A dexterous movement of his two strong hands—the dog was in his grip, a prisoner.

Calmly the great detective next awaited the arrival of the Circassian.

He came up breathless, and, instead of behaving as everybody had expected, ignored both Oliver and the dog, and made a frenzied effort to secure what that great beast had carried away with him.

"By Jove!" said Wendell Oliver. And "By Jove!" he said again; for, failing to force the brute's unwilling jaws, the Circassian had drawn a dagger and ripped its throat. The body lay between them on the pavement. Now for the first time Oliver made a rapid survey of Adam's "Sunday joint." In an instant his practised eye had recognized it for a portion of a human body —a burglar's, most likely! "No, you don't!' he said, anticipating the Circassian, and closing, so as to escape the other's weapon, "Constable, arrest this man!" he cried.

The policeman hesitated.

"I am Wendell Oliver!"

The effect of that famous and thrice famous name was magical. Every idler who had gathered there stood on the alert. The policeman hesitated no longer.

The great detective had released his hold.

Digitized by Google

Again the Circassian's dagger caught the sun——

"I charge him with murder, with attempted murder," cried the great detective. "And now with suicide."

It was too true. The devoted Circassian, seeing that all was up and escape impossible, had changed his mind and, instead of in Oliver's, had buried the dagger deep in his own heart, right up to the hilt. The blood-stained point was sticking out under his shoulder-blade. The thing was ghastly.

"Now to Dunster House!" cried Wendell Oliver; "we have still to settle accounts with Prince Marmoroff!"

CHAPTER XI

PRINCE MARMOROFF'S LETTER

IT WAS suggested at the inquest, and we have every reason to believe this theory, that the faithful fellow killed himself in order to gain time—that he died, not to save himself, but his unworthy master. And certainly, if that was the case, Popoff, the Don Cossack, can hardly be said to have lived in vain; for when the police broke into Dunster House, Prince Marmoroff had vanished, and none could say what had become of him.

It is surmised, however, that he proceeded to Hull, escaping thence on one of the Russian boats which ply between the Baltic seaboard and that harbor. It is known now that a stranger of his imposing height and amplitude stayed for two nights and a day at a house in Anlaby Road, ostensibly as chief engineer of the *S. S. Nicolaieff*, just then arrived from Riga; and it is equally certain that the captain of this vessel would find no difficulty in obliging so affluent a fellow-countryman.

The owners of the house said that, in spite of the hue and cry, they had never suspected their lodger of being the Prince; he was neither dressed nor did he look like one, and in a seafaring town like Hull it didn't pay to be too particular and one man's money was as good as another's and they weren't going to be held responsible.

One thing alone was certain. The Prince was gone, and where he had gone to was a mystery. He had disappeared as completely as any of the burglars. Almost as completely, for there was a letter ready to be posted, stamped, addressed, everything, which, in the haste and confusion of his flight, he had left behind him. It affords a clue which any of our readers is at liberty to follow, though we doubt whether they will make more of it than the official experts. We give it in full, as, more than any possible narrative we could indite, it clears the air, telling as it does, in the Prince's own words, why he took Dunster House to begin with, why he dined off the gold plate and made such a public spectacle of himself and the great oak sideboard; and, last but not least, it provides an explanation if not a justification of all his dealings with the burglars.

This letter, written in a fine hand on thin notepaper, is addressed to Professor Andrei Sidorenko, 13 Pushkinskaya, Kharkoff, Russia:

"Dear Andrei Semyonich," it begins, "so long a time has passed since you heard from me that you must think I have been sent to Siberia, or, like our friends Daragan and Nikitin, have suffered for my political convictions. You are mistaken. I am in England and hard at work in my laboratories. You are astonished? Well, sometimes, so am I. But the execution of my plans demanded secrecy; so, secret I have been. Not even my dear old mother knows of my whereabouts; only my bankers and our valued friend Palkin.

"It is now close on a year since I decided to come to England. The work has been fruitful; in another month I will be able to publish the most striking of my results. They will create a sensation. Mankind will bless me as the champion who has added another score of years to its life, to its activities, its hopes and innocent pleasures. Triumphant science will have pushed Death further away. Perhaps, at some not too-remote date, that arch-enemy will be entirely subjugated.

"I will now go back to the Autumn of last year when you and I spent so delightful an evening at your charming residence. I see you still, working among your books and instruments, the chief ornament of your university, the inspired teacher, the indulgent friend. You will remember that I complained to you of the absurd humanity of our Russian code, and especially of those clauses which related to the practise of vivisection; you will remember how I raged against this limitation?

"I was perhaps the most eminent bacteriologist of my day, and the only outlet for my various inoculations were monkeys,

Digitized by Google

white mice, guinea-pigs and rabbits. The law which permitted our friends Caragan and Nikitin to perish miserably would not allow these heroes to serve the sacred cause of science. In a word, my experiments, devoted as they were to the cure and prevention of human decay or illness, required some small and passing sacrifice of human beings. What, after all, are white mice, or even the larger apes! For the proper success and completion of my experiments I required ordinary men and women. In Russia this was impossible. I resolved to go to England.

"WHY, you will ask, did I resolve to go to England? Is human life less sacred there than elsewhere? Or does that noble people so venerate the sacred name of science that it is willing, nay proud, to perish in that so holy cause? Nothing of the kind. I will explain. For years I have been familiar with English literature; as a relaxation after strenuous labor I can commend it. Otherwise it is degrading stuff, unfit to be compared with the lightest utterances of our own Russians. But it has the one merit I have referred to, and, additionally, it gave me my Great Idea.

"Glance at these histories. You will find them exclusively occupied with crime, with wealth, or with people of title. Judged by what they read, the English are a nation of burglars, millionaires, detectives, and aristocrats. They have no other interests. A title and a million pounds excite them as nothing else, except the efforts made by their burglars to secure the million pounds, and the counter-efforts of their detectives to bring these rascals to book. It therefore occurred to me that England was the very country for my experiments.

"I will tell you why. I had only to take a house there, advertise myself as a person of wealth and title, and the burglars would flock in like flies. They would be the very material for my purpose. Once secured, I could do as I pleased with them. No inquiring friends, no difficulties with the police; the fellows would be entirely at my disposal. So I argued, and such, indeed, turned out to be the case.

"The affair would cost money, a good deal of money; but, unlike yourself, I had not neglected the material rewards of science. You remember how years ago I patented a pill and a powder, which, freely advertised, brought me an immense fortune. Every *moujik* in Little Russia swears by these preparations. The first difficulty was, therefore, non-existent.

"My next step was to give myself a title. I chose that of Prince, it being more grandiloquent than Baron or Count, and, moreover, in England it has an especial flavor, being confined entirely to members of the Royal Family. So I became Prince Marmoroff. Why Marmoroff I neither know nor care; it is a good old Muscovite name, and perhaps I fancied it. Now, all I had to do was to prepare my trap and bait it.

CHAPTER XII

SOME THINGS ARE MADE VERY PLAIN

"IN THE Autumn of last year I came to London, and there, as Prince Marmoroff, I reconnoitered. By a fortunate accident the finest house in the city was for hire. I decided to take it. My name and now my residence would give me a prestige that must attract every burglar in this country. I would be talked about; a thousand eyes would observe me; I had only to demonstrate that my house was worth attempting for it to be attempted straightway. I resolved upon a display that would be at once a challenge and an irresistible temptation. But before dwelling on the bait that I hung out, I must first of all tell you how I arranged my interior.

"Dunster House—so my residence is called—is an immense mansion standing by itself. There is no garden; it is simply what the English call 'detached.' My first care was to see that no one could enter the house without my cognizance. This was easily arranged. And then I left one weak spot which any burglar could force. He would enter, and then, step by step, fall right into the trap I had arranged for him, a simple mechanism the details of which are not of any great importance.

"And so, instead of white mice and baboons, I at last have real human beings—of a low and degenerate type perhaps, but still, their organs, their nervous system, their tissues are indubitably human. Every night they come to me and are caught. The top floors of my house are devoted to them. There you will find cage after cage, each with its occupant. I had these receptacles made abroad, and they were delivered here

Digitized by Google

as furniture. Popoff, my Cossack servant, spent many hours in putting them together again. But now they stand, and most are occupied by my unwilling subjects; and, as I calculated, no one calls for these good fellows and makes inquiries. If they are missed no one has the temerity to inform the police. No previous bacteriologist, not even the great Pasteur, has worked so advantageously.

"TO ATTRACT these creatures I took this great palace and called myself a Prince; but the real bait is a service of imitation gold plate which I had specially made in Paris and which would deceive anybody, particularly when seen from the street or at a distance. In a fine room, brilliantly lighted, I dine every evening in state. This room is exposed to every passer-by; not a blind is drawn, not a curtain. And there I sit, like one of the Argive kings, surrounded by gold, wallowing in gold —or at least an excellent imitation. That is what draws my friends into the spider's web. They see it, and their doom is written. Every night they come for it, and stay to serve the glorious cause of science.

"You feel that they may disturb the neighborhood? Those that howl are drugged into silence. Should they persist, they are inoculated with cultures whose properties are still in doubt. The worst cases I reserve for my most critical experiments. When they die their bodies are cut up and given to my *borzois*. I brought over several of these dogs with that especial object. The people here think that these animals are in the house to give the alarm and protect my priceless service of 'gold' plate. Nothing of the kind. Bodies are always troublesome. I get rid of mine that way. It is at once a simple and efficient process. And so that the dogs should not suffer from the dangerous bacilli they are called upon to eat, I see that they are plentifully provided with counter-germs, or what we bacteriologists call 'phagocytes.'

"It is hard work, and sometimes I feel that it is too much for me. Popoff also suffers from the strain. But now we have acquired an assistant, which makes things easier. This fellow, an English *moujik*, pigeon-chested and ridiculous, is so great a fool that we are able to keep him in entire ignorance of what goes on here. For a small sum of money I have acquired his services over a stated period, and, when his time is up, my experiments will be complete, the great discovery made. As you can guess, I am working on the same lines as Metchnikoff, Cohendy, Herter and Pochon. How these men, did they know of my advantages, would envy me!

"The course I am following has its dangers; and yet society is doubly in my debt: for am I not ridding it of many of its most notorious rascals? Bah, these men deserve no better fate! And even those that survive will have lived for something. It is better that they should be here, furthering the glorious cause of science, than at liberty or in a common prison.

"In December next you will hear from me and learn from my own lips the great discoveries that have marked my stay in London. Meanwhile, dear Professor, I have the honor to be your devoted friend and erstwhile colleague,

DMITRI MIKHAILOVICH."

THIS letter, accurately translated, was first made public during the police-court proceedings which terminated in the issue of a futile warrant for Prince Marmoroff's arrest. Its production was hailed with a sigh of satisfaction by Lady Brissenden and all her guests, as well as by the public who had merely looked in through the area railings; by the Broadnaxes, the Wyes, by Lady Clarges and her seven unmarried daughters, and also by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, who had acted as caretakers. It cleared the air.

At the three clubs, however, though many a forgotten member now reappeared, microbes and all, its publication was hailed as a professional calamity. Never in its entire history had the art and craft of burglary been made to look so utterly ridiculous. In journalistic circles, too, this document was far from welcome. It proved anew, what every reader has already surmised, that the newspapers had been wrong, and that the Press, as a reliable and trustworthy source of information, has long since forfeited all claims to public confidence.

It remains to be said that the Russian police, when questioned about the gentleman to whom this letter was addressed, namely Professor Andrei Sidorenko of Kharkoff University, replied that he had recently been sent to Siberia and that nothing more was known of him. Wendell Oliver, the great detective, doubled his reputation

Digitized by Google

for infallibility. Though in justice to that expert it should be said that he had the generosity to reward Adam Newman handsomely for throwing the boot and thus assisting in the elucidation of the mystery.

Adam, exonerated from all blame by his own sworn statement and also by the Prince's letter, was dismissed with a caution and returned once more to the humble occupation of fruit and vegetable hawker.

As to Prince Marmoroff, all we can say about that vanished scientist is that a certain Professor Balnascheff, resident in Odessa, has recently published a revolutionary volume on the actively benevolent bacilli. He contends that a system highly impregnated with the tetracoccus, for instance, can ward off old age and prolong human existence till well past the hundred and twentieth year. In bacteriological circles it is surmised that the gifted author can be none other than the quondam Prince Marmoroff.

Dunster House is again unoccupied, and the agents stipulate that the tenant or purchaser must occupy every room and keep a staff of servants equal to the extent and prestige of so vast a mansion. The *borzois* were sold at auction and fetched good prices.

The HOUSEBOAT SWEEPSTAKES

by FRED SQUIRE BROWN

CAPTAIN HI and Captain Bill sat sunning themselves and smoking their pipes in front of the Neptune boathouse. The morning was not far advanced, but this was their day's work and they had begun upon it.

They were old, old cronies, Captain Hi and Captain Bill. They had been born at pretty much the same time and at pretty much the same place; they had grown up as boys together and together they had sailed the Seven Seas, and now they had settled down together for a comfortable old age at Binders Bay, where they had begun in the beginning. And during all that time, from their respective cradles clear on down to these days of sunning themselves in front of the Neptune boathouse, they had never for one brief instant agreed on any one subject whatsoever.

Each had always been ready to fight for the other, and whatever one possessed was owned by both, share and share alike, whether food, chattels, clothing, tobacco or

Digitized by Google

money. Neither was contented away from the other. Yet never had the two of them voiced agreement upon any point of any kind at any time. Even the free-handed division of material things between them was put into words by some such pleasantry as: "Take it or leave it, gol durn ye, and say nawthink!"

They sat and sunned themselves and smoked their pipes in silence and in great contentment.

"As shore as me an' you be setting on this 'ere fo'c'sle," chugged Captain Hi, between puffs, cocking his head to port and shutting one eye, "'ere comes them lads as owns the new houseboats," and the old sailor extended a tattooed arm toward a couple of young men who were heading for the beach in a rowboat.

"This ain't no fo'c'sle. It's a porch, gosh ding it!" bellowed Captain Bill, squinting at his partner. "I reckon if you was on a ship now you'd call the gangway the front gate, wouldn't ye?"

"Yes, I would, ef I'd a mind to!" replied Captain Hi, with a defiant stare.

"Yuh wouldn't nuther!" snorted Captain Bill, somewhat at a loss as to whether his contradiction was placed where it would do the most good. Before he could clear this up in his mind, Captain Hi tactfully changed the conversation.

"Them young fellers pulls a powerful pooty stroke," remarked Captain Hi, as he glared in admiration at the long graceful sweep of the oars.

"That's as may be," mumbled Captain Bill. "Ef ye mean them 'ere strokes is powerful and pooty too, one and the same time, come and go, I'd say there is strokes as is not such gret booties wot is stronger'n them as is not so powerful pooty."

"I dast ye to say all that over again without changin' it none," chuckled Captain Hi. "What ye talkin' about, anyway?" and the old fellow leaned forward to leer at the other had-been.

"Oh, I'm talkin' about the time a friend o' mine mistook a compass for a butt-cup and come within a ace o' tearing the hull ship's brains out by the roots to git a drink with, thereby putting nigh unto forty-eight of his mates in peril of japhardy."

"Ye dunno wot ye're talkin' about!" yowled Captain Hi, suddenly feeling that he was getting the worst of the argument, whatever it was, and bouncing around in his chair till his back was turned to Captain Bill.

Captain Bill contradicted that statement. He did so with such vehemence that he got some of his own whiskers in his mouth and was unable to contradict the next remark he could see his friend was going to make.

"Ship ahoy! Cap'n Hi and Cap'n Bill," cheerily sang out the newcomers. "How's she heading?"

"Ahoy! Ahoy!" bawled the barnacles. "Sou'east by sou', sir!"

"Keep her so!"

"Aye, aye, sir! Come aboard, gen'l'men, and we'll have a gam."

The graybeards toddled about and speedily got rocking-chairs for the visitors, and soon the four were lolling at ease and puffing their pipes in great good fellowship on the porch of the Neptune boathouse.

Gradually, under the guidance of the younger man, the talk swung around to the subject of boat-racing.

"I mind the time," chatted Captain Hi, "we raced the *Helen and Mary* from the Hook to Charlesting, me and Bill being on the *Flyin' Turtle*, Cap'n Jones, 310 foot over all, 276 on the load water line, 38 beam, 1500 tons, drawing 14 feet, an' loaded with everythink that ever wuz, from a sewin'-machine to Mississippi politics. We spins along fur two days, fust one to wind'ard an' then t'other, till I were so worked up over the race that I lays aloft an' shins up the fo't'gall'n'm'st all the way to the truck for to make a hobserwation to see whut I c'd see.

"As I cast me eyes to loo'rd I sez ter meself, says I——" Here Captain Hi found himself suddenly at loss for further material to piece out the yarn he was spinning out of nothing in particular.

He was rescued from this awkward predicament, quite unintentionally, by Captain Bill, who entered the conversation to announce that his colleague had been flatly wrong in every detail he had given—names of the contending ships, dimensions, rig, course of the race, destination and everything else. The whole tale, of course, had been only the product of his friend's imagination, but Captain Bill didn't propose to let even imaginary things pass as true. The bewhiskered disputants straightway fell to to thrash it out and were checked only by the production of a flask with exceed-

Digitized by Google

ingly soothing contents. Incidentally, nobody ever learned what Captain Hi had seen from the fo't'gall'n'm'st.

"WE ARE going to have a race between our houseboats," remarked Nounce, casually, "and we thought maybe we could engage you two to act as skippers."

"Wot?" exclaimed Captain Hi, throwing up his hands. "Goin' to race yer houseboats! Why, man alive, ye mought as well talk of racin' a couple of islands! Gosh ding!"

"Oh, I wouldn't go so fur as to say that," drawled Captain Bill.

"How'd ye do it, then? Now, come tell me, ye ole barn-burner, how c'd it be did? That's wot I wants to know!" insisted Captain Hi, wagging his head like an advertising figure in a window.

Brent came to the relief of Captain Bill, who had been dazed by the query as to how it could be "did."

"You may use sweeps, poles or tide and wind, but towing by steam power or motor-launches is barred."

The houseboat owners had known that it would require a great deal of delicate handling to induce the sailors to undertake the navigation of the small but lumbering craft, but they were anxious to get the floating houses over to Clink Bay, and it had occurred to them it would be cheaper by $50 to have a speed contest between them than to wait for a tow. Besides, the scheme had promised a diversion. It was as plain as a pike-staff that, if one of the mariners consented to make the trip, the other would die before he would "sign on." Likewise, if one refused, the other would take a houseboat over the route if he had to steal it. But the problem was to get them both to set sail—and in rival houseboats.

So Nounce, in pretended excitement, pushed the game along: "I'll bet my shack can beat yours a day, Brent, if Captain Hi will act as skipper for me. What say you, Captain? Would I win?"

"Ye shore would, Gov'ner! Ye shore would!" squawked Captain Hi.

"Is that 'ere so?" exploded Captain Bill. "Shore would win, would he, hey? Well, he jess wouldn't do nothink o' the kind, he wouldn't!"

"Dast ye be game to make a try on it?" asked Captain Hi. "Will ye agree to sign on for the v'yage?"

"I'll not agree to nothink!" shouted Captain Bill.

"Ye dasn't!"

"I dast!"

The old codgers hopped to and fro, stamped, puffed and shook their fists at each other in a fine frenzy, and seemed about to commit homicide, when the younger men pacified them in the usual way and declared the only plan that could be followed to determine the relative merits of the ancient and honorable seamen would be for each to prove what he could do by making the race.

"I can beat him!" vociferated Captain Hi.

"Let's see ye do it!" ejaculated Captain Bill, and they signed on for the trial of skill.

PREPARATIONS for the grand event were soon begun. Crews for both houseboats had to be selected, ship's stores put aboard and rules of contest made up. The two skippers couldn't agree on anything, as usual, so the owners had to make all arrangements without regard to the wishes of the commanders.

Young Brent found a husky, youthful, stupid negro, and Bat, as he called himself, was put aboard the Brentwood at low water, when the houseboat was high and dry. Taking a seat on the "porch," Bat promptly went comfortably to sleep, lulled by the heavy rain that happened to be falling at the time.

Now it happened that Bat had never seen a houseboat and knew nothing of their habits. He had seen houses, however, and houses lived on dry land and never went to sea. So it came to pass that when he was awakened some hours later by the arrival of Captain Bill in a boat at high tide, his eyes opened upon a sea of waters on whose bosom rode the house on whose front porch he had gone trustfully to sleep. The result, after one long glare of horrified surprise at this cataclysm of nature, was a tremendous screech and an immediate ascent into the air above him. This was promptly followed by his interpretation of the event: "Oh, lohdy, lohdy! De wuld am comin' to de end! De wuld am comin' to de end!"

Captain Bill assured him that it was not. He also assured him of several other things

Digitized by Google

of a more immediate nature. But Bat clung to his belief.

"Say, boss, we all gwine to be drownded!" he chattered.

"Lookee 'ere, ye imp!" snarled Captain Bill. "Don't ye call me boss. Call me Cap'n. I'm skipper o' this 'ere craft. D'ye understan'?"

"Yas, I knows yo' is, but look at de ribber! It's done riz a mile!"

"Well, wot o' that?" Captain Bill wanted to know. "An' say 'sir' w'en ye're talkin' to me!"

"Yassum!" replied the terrified darky.

II

LAT SLACK water on the top of the tide in the forenoon of the day set for the race a pistol was fired as a signal for the start "in the presence of a large and enthusiastic audience." Nounce had inveigled a half-baked poet on his floating cottage, the *Sprat*. The rhymster, it must be confessed, had no idea that he was to constitute the crew in the eventful cruise. He supposed he was a mere guest. He was wrong.

"Stan' by to heave anchor!" shrieked the two skippers.

Bat rolled his eyes and looked at his "boss," but never moved. The poet merely adjusted his eyeglasses for a better view of the proceedings.

"Bear a hand there, ye swab!" shouted the old man of the *Brentwood*.

"Shake a leg!" yelped his rival, his acute irritation limiting his vocabulary.

There was no result on either boat. Captain Bill dragged Bat to the anchor-chain and forced him to lay hold and haul in. As the negro was as strong as a mule he soon had the mudhook at the surface of the water, where he had his first glimpse and knowledge of the strange object at the end of the chain—doubtless a marine monster. He promptly let out a cry of dismay and released his hold. Captain Bill had gone to another part of the outfit, to begin poling, but, before leaving Bat, he had cast the anchor-chain off the bits. As a consequence, when the black fellow let go, the entire chain rattled overboard before the irate skipper could "fleet for'ard" to prevent the calamity. Captain Bill was stiff from rage. He couldn't even chase the negro, who was wildly looking for a chance to "abandon ship."

"How in blue blazes be I goin' to go to sea without no mudhook?" Captain Bill wanted to know, when he could find his voice. All the spectators told him.

There was only one thing to do and that was to take the boarding-boat and grapple for the lost anchor. This Captain Bill proceeded to do, permitting his "ship" to drift at will with the terrified gentleman of color alone on board.

When Bat realized that the farmhouse was deliberately moving itself from its very foundation and whirling around hindside before and front end to, he was convinced that a "hant" had seized upon the establishment with an intention of everlastingly destroying "de whole bilin'."

"Man one o' them 'ere sweeps an' keep offen shore!" roared Captain Bill.

He might as well have ordered Bat to box the compass backward for any comprehension the boy had of what a sweep was or its purpose in the general scheme of life.

On board the *Sprat* Captain Hi was having the time of his sea-going life. Finding early in the game that the poet couldn't understand the situation or anything else relating to the affair in hand, he swept the literary genius aside and got up his own anchor. The ebbing tide and gentle breeze started the *Sprat* away in fine style.

While the poet was commenting on the "magnificent marine picture" the skipper was plying his pole with energy to get to windward of the *Brentwood*, but the latter, having no one to pilot her, persisted in circling across the *Sprat's* bows—or front stoop, whichever you will—blocking her course, for there wasn't seaway for Captain Hi to pass his foe. Besides that, the finicky wind shifted so as to drive the *Brentwood* back toward her original anchorage, so that Captain Hi was compelled to "reverse his engines" to avoid a collision.

By the time the racers got back to Captain Bill's boarding-boat he had found his chain, and, getting it aboard, once more anchored his craft about where she was before she went adrift. This left Captain Hi in a pocket, hopelessly shut in. Captain Hi promptly filled the air with an amazing collection of blistering deep-water words. Thus, raging impotently, he dumped his anchor as though it were red-hot.

"I'll bet the ice will catch them before they finish!" some one sang out. It was

Digitized by Google

then early in June and both skippers judged the remark offensive.

They spent half an hour spatting as to which of them it was meant for. But, as soon as possible after that, Captain Bill, profiting by his experience with Bat's seamanship, got up anchor under his own personally conducted supervision and again they were off—this time backward, because the tide had by this time swung the houseboats about so that they couldn't go any other way.

Again the wind hauled around and was now fair. Followed by power-boats with screeching whistles, the racers made good time to the mouth of the cove, each of the skippers working a sweep in the endeavor to keep his course.

Once in the open bay, the sailing-chart required the contestants to bear northeast by north in order to make a creek through which it was intended to pass to save distance and for shelter in case it should come on to blow.

But, when the time came for changing the course, it was absolutely necessary that both sweeps on each boat should be manned. This meant further dependence upon the services of Bat and the poet. The first thing Bat did when Captain Bill attempted to show the negro how to work the big oar was to tumble overside. Cheers from the spectators.

Deftly picking up a clove hitch on the bight of a line, Captain Bill dived and passed the hitch over Bat's head under water. The old skipper then hastily regained the *Brentwood's* deck and drew the black boy's woolly pate to the surface. Trolling his catch as carefully as he could, so as not to hang him, Captain Bill soon had Bat alongside, but to hoist the helpless hulk on board with the line around his neck was out of the question. The only thing to do was to take a turn on a cleat and tow the protesting body until another line could be bent on below the arms in order to yank the derelict up on deck without choking him to death. This was done to the accompaniment of language, furnished by Captain Bill and of comments, furnished by the spectators in the accompanying fleet.

As a result of these operations the good ship *Brentwood* was now serenely floating in exactly the wrong direction, a mile behind the *Sprat*.

ON THE *Sprat* the poet, when ordered to man the sweep, said nothing and did nothing, being happily ignorant of the purport of the mandate. Captain Hi started in to explain the duties of a foremast hand on board his vessel by deftly grabbing the romantic verse-maker by the scruff of the neck and rubbing his nose on the implement that was to be "manned."

"Durn ye! Ketch holt o' that 'ere thing and work it!" the Captain hissed between his teeth.

Loud cheers rose from the attendant fleet of little boats.

The poet chirped a mild remonstrance. But, though mild, it was couched in literary terms of many syllables, and of an import not known to Captain Hi. The latter's only reply was an 'exasperated but feeble and uncomprehending: "Wot!"

Thereafter it was to be noted that Captain Hi treated the poet with a kind of gingerly consideration.

Notwithstanding the fact that the poem-producer, after being informed as to the office of the sweep, persisted in pulling opposite to the stroke of Captain Hi three times out of five, thereby causing the *Sprat* to steer a zigzag course, the houseboat eventually made the mouth of the creek, where Captain Hi could use the pole and dispense with the services of his incompetent crew. This gave the poet ample opportunity to admire the beauties of nature. This he proceeded to do.

Up to the time of the arrival at the creek the day had been an ideal one, but now Captain Hi, in casting his weather eye around the horizon, noticed the appearance of a black cloud in the southwest that plainly told him there was a hurricane coming, and he noted with satisfaction that the motor fleet was racing to shelter. He would now be rid of the gibes that had pestered him ever since he set sail.

"Scoot, ye namby-pamby, knittin'-machine sailors!" he ejaculated in glee. "Ef that 'ere blow ketches ye, ev'y tarnal one o' ye'll have went to yer last pink tea, ye will, by hokey!"

The blow came like a broadside from a dreadnought, and with it lightning and a torrential rain. The wind whined louder and louder as it grew stronger and fiercer until, attaining a velocity of eighty miles an hour, it roared and boomed in a way to

Digitized by Google

carry consternation to the stoutest heart. Darkness of night overcast the scene and the rain was so thick that it shut off the vision completely. Huge sheets of water were clipped from the surface of the bay and sent scurrying in the shape of spray high in the air, rendering it impossible to see a fathom from a man's nose.

Before the storm broke Captain Hi had found a snug harbor and safely moored his charge to several stanch spiles with as many lines as he could find. Then, lighting his pipe in the cabin, he remarked to the poet: "Natur gits up some powerful scrumptious dingbats, she do, don't she? I b'lieve ye admire to see grandur an' sech, don't ye, ef I ketched the drift o' yer patter this mornin'?"

"I shall compose an ode to the tempest, the magnificent raging tornado, and it shall be full of the fire of genius!" cooed the enraptured youth.

"More'n likely ye'll be full of water afore long," replied Captain Hi. "Ef I be any jedge, this craft's goin' to sink in a dum short while. She's a new boat and I see they didn't calk any seam above the lowest ones in the gunnels o' the scow. Now as soon as this 'ere bootiful tempest o' yourn lays, there's goin' to be a passle o' breakers come heavin' in hyer and she'll take water by the ton. 'Stid o' thinkin' up stuff to write a piece about ye'd better be standin' by to man a pump!"

And, cussing at the bucking and rearing of the houseboat as it tugged at its moorings, Captain Hi set about getting something to eat, grumbling at the good luck of Captain Bill out there with no mooring-lines to jerk the daylights out of him every time his hooker made a jump.

III

AT CAPTAIN BILL'S first squint of the storm-cloud he had made a line fast to either end of his boarding boat and shoved her astern of the *Brentwood*.

Then, pulling out the plug in the small boat's bottom so that she would fill, he made the lines fast to cleats at the opposite corners of the "back po'ch" as Bat would say. There was slack enough to permit the waterlogged boarding-boat to drag several fathoms clear in the wake of the *Brentwood* when she attained the momentum that the gale would surely give her.

Getting his bearings as best he could without a compass, the old salt cheerfully exclaimed: "Come on, ye bloomink buster, an' blow yerself inside out if ye want to! I are ready fur ye!"

With a snarl and a snort and a deafening bang, likewise a shrill, piercing shriek, the blast did as Captain Bill had requested and hit the *Brentwood* a mighty wallop fair on end. The *Brentwood* tried to stand on her head.

But the drag anchor hauled her stern down out of the clouds, and, once she settled on an even keel, Captain Bill, having shipped a sweep at the after end of the scow, "took the wheel" to keep her dead before the wind, proposing to let her "run free," go where she might, for if ever she veered enough to present a broadside to the tempest she would be capsized.

"I'll gin ye ten minutes to blow yerself out," mused Captain Bill, "an' so long as I have sea-room I'll dance with ye till y'ere tuckered—blessed ef I don't!"

Captain Bill couldn't see where he was going and didn't care, and he thought that there was nothing to prevent him from making headway unless he came in collision with some disabled craft.

THE houseboat kept plunging, kicking and jumping like a wild broncho, trying to leap free from the drag which boiled along with an angry swish in the wake, but the lines bade fair to hold, and the trembling, shivering houseboat stood the prodigious onslaught in the handsomest manner possible.

"This is one o' the most comfortable shindigs I have ever saw," chortled Captain Bill as he hung on to his steering-oar with a deathlike grip. "It shore is a dirty night on the coast. Folkses all well, Bat?"

But poor Bat was not interested in the health of his "folkses." In fact, he was not interested in much of anything, even in his own terror, for his nautical venture was beginning to bring him physical woes of his own.

The wind was so powerful that the surface of the bay was smashed flat, and the rattling, quaking houseboat made good time, despite the drag, for the twelve minutes that the tempest maintained its maximum intensity. Just as Captain Bill was congratulating himself that he was having a

Digitized by Google

perfectly lovely time, two sharp reports stimulated Bat's fright several hundred degrees and notified the sailor that the draglines had parted.

"Now we'll hav a passle o' real fun, Bat!" bellowed Captain Bill as the liberated houseboat made a spring as though about to take a hurdle. "Stan' by fur to—*wow!*"

As suddenly as it had come on, the rage of the elements subsided and when Captain Bill could make an observation, which was after the submerged houseboat bobbed to the surface, he was filled with elation to see that the *Brentwood* had dived into the mouth of a creek that he knew led into Clink Bay.

As the hatches were battened down, Captain Bill didn't mind the wetting. The tide favored him, and from that on he had plain sailing, with nothing to do but steer, as the *Brentwood* drifted or was blown to her destination.

Captain Hi of the *Sprat* succeeded in keeping his bilge free, and, as soon as the weather would permit, got under way. The creek he had to navigate was on the opposite side of the island along which Captain Bill was coasting and the two streams converged in Clink Bay.

The outcome of the race was that the two houseboats arrived at the stakeboat stem and stem at exactly the same moment—much to the surprise of Brent and Nounce, who were waiting at the goal with little expectation of ever seeing their houseboats or the crews thereof.

Slapping one another on the back, they rejoiced in expressions of immense satisfaction, Nounce gleefully exclaiming: "Well, they got here all right! We certainly fooled those two old chumps properly and sufficiently. Here are our houseboats in good time and free of charge. Good work, I tell you!"

"It certainly was," replied Brent. "We are the cute lads, sure enough. Listen to them jawing each other!"

And this is what the smart young men heard:

"Ship ahoy!" roared Captain Bill. "Thought ye'd beat me a day, did ye?"

"Ahoy yerself!" responded Captain Hi. "Ye didn't win, did ye?"

"I could hev, ef I'd been sich a booby as to run under cover as soon as a leetle breath o' fresh air fanned me cheek."

"I dast ye to race me back to the Neptune boathouse ef ye think ye kin beat me!" screeched Captain Hi.

"Git under way with yer old barn, then, ye lubber!" croaked Captain Bill.

And back they went, houseboats and all, leaving Brent and Nounce making frantic appeals that fell unheard upon the ears of Captain Bill and Captain Hi, for Captain Bill and Captain Hi were disagreeing.

Digitized by Google

The Voice of the Dead

Being Extracts from the Journal of Ivory Crab-tree, Esq., with an after-word by Captain Jeremiah Cobb, of the Schooner "Redemption"

by

LINCOLN COLCORD

AUGUST the 10th, in the Year of Our Lord 1759.—I, Ivory Crabtree, Supercargo of the Schooner *Redemption*, she hailing from the port of Boston, and of 133 tons burthen, do hereby set down all that I know of a bad Business, by command of that awful Voice which speakes by night and sendeth fear to the hearts of them who beheld the Deed done. For though God and my own heart will absolve me from blame in the matter, yet the Judgements of men are swift and presumptive, and Innocence lieth equally dead with Guilt in the grave; with which thought in mind, it doth behoove me to write honestly what happened, and my part in it; that, should God's retribution visit these Cut-Throates, and I with them be delivered into the hands of the Law, I may stand exonerated before men by my words.

This very night (which now, thank God, is past!) did the Voice speake to me. I awoke in the midst of Darkness, hearing it; and so great a fear did smite me that I lay powerless, like one in the Grip of a trance. For 'tis no light thing to recognize a Voice known to be Dead. Of that trying moment the memory is confused; but now it seemeth to my Recollection that the Voice did fill the room, coming from above, where is no Opening or any means of Entrance.

"*Ivory Crabtree,*" it said, "*write of my murder! Write, and lose no time!*"

At that, I must have made some outcry; for well I knew what Murder was meant and who was speaking. From the main-cabin came Trench running, flung open my door, and shouted, "God-a-mercy, what now? Avast that caterwauling!"

Seeing him in the door, and the Light behind, I took heart. "The Voice!" I cried. "It waked me!"

He gave back, with Fear plainley writ upon his face. "Again! What said it?" cried he.

Now, although cold in every Limb with the fright of that awakening, my mind had been busy in even so short a space; for I was ever quick in an Emergeancy, like to a ship well-balanced upon the Moment's wind. Accordingly, with an invention and Promptitude amazing to myself, "The Voice did seeme to count," I made reply. "*One, two, three, four, five, six, seven!*" This, in the stress and confluency of emotions, I deem a clever answer; for seven is the number of our ship's Company, excepting myself, and, as a matter of course, Simpkins, who is but

Digitized by Google

a cabin-boy, and not considered in the Affair. And well had I observed that, since three nights gone, when first the Voice did speake about the ship, Trench has hourly sickened from the Swelling of his conscience.

With my words, I wager, ringing in his ears, he slammed to the door and left me. Hastily, then, I arose and made after him, having no relish for Solitude. Without, I found him before the table, beating thereon a tattoo with his hands.

"What means it?" he cried at my approach. "Night upon night this Voice! And why seven? By my troth, why seven?"

"Heaven knows, unless it be the count of Doom!" I said, thinking to play upon his condition.

He looked up then quickly, regarding me with a glance before which better men than I have quailed. In sooth, this man Trench is a wild Beast, and hath the heart of such; for no human Soul could looke from eyes so piercingly, but only the soul of one who Lusts and Preys as the beastes do. Beyond which, itself terrible enough, I did perceive that he and the Brandy bottle were arm-in-arm again. Ere I could move, he leaped upon me and had me by the throat.

"You cur!" cried he. "Now will I make it Eight, before you send us all to the yard-arm!" Saying which, he shooke me to and fro, so that the Breath left my body and I felt that my hour had come.

At the sudden clamour and commotion, two men, Saunderson and Mitchell, burst in upon us, crying, "Hold, Trench!" The grip loosened about my throat, and I got my Speech.

"Trench, in the name of God, listen to me!" I cried, speaking with difficulty, for he had choked me cruelly. "It was a lie! The Voice counted *eight!*" For even in this pass, my wits had been busy; and I surmised that I had trifled overmuch.

Trench did but laugh, and tighten again his Hold. "You lie with too great ease, and little cause!" said he. "'Tis best to stop your tongue from wagging, and thus remove the means." These were his words; by which it may be seen that he had past the Boundes of reason; for what had he against me, since I told him plainley that the count was eight?

Be that as it may, my own reason was fast ebbing, whilst the cabin whirled about me and the lights grew dim. In this Crisis, having no earthly hope, since Saunderson and Mitchell were but amused at my Discomforture, judge of my astounishment and Terrour upon hearing again that spectral Voice speake from overhead!

"*Beware, Trench, beware!*" it cried, filling the cabin with a hollow and unearthly Sound. "*Shed no more blood, I say!*"

For a moment we stood, I in the grasp of Trench, frozen both with utter Consternation. Then was I flung athwart the cabin, and lay as I fell, daring not to move or expose my pains. But how shall I describe the faces of these three Pirates, plainley visible to me beneath my arm, as they heard once more, and to such point, the Voice of their Captain, killed and cast overboard before our Eyes not five days gone?

"Heard you that Tone?" whispered Saunderson to Mitchell.

"'Twas Cobb to the life!" answered the other, his knees of a sudden giving way.

THEN whilst they waited in craven Expectation, feet clattered upon the stairs, a hand flung wide the door, and a man appeared, showing a ghastly face and dropping jaw, whome I recognized as one Thomas, a sailor.

"I saw the ghost of Captain Cobb, with bloody head!" he screamed.

At that, they stood aghast; and, being unable to get Reply from the poor sailor, they drew together about the lanthern, gazing fearfully back, and starting at common sounds. And soon Thomas did somewhat revive, whereupon their Fear was increased a thousand-fold; for he told a hideous Tale. Coming aft past the main-mast, he had encountered Cobb's Ghost walking without noise of foot-fall, and laughing horridley. Light from a cabin window did strike the Thing and reveal it bound about the head with bloody Rags. At which, through so sudden and shocking a fear, Thomas knew no more, but only that he fled, and found himself with us. This he told soberly, Trench the while plying him with questions; until there was no longer doubt in any mind that Cobb's Ghost walked loose above us, to be seen of Eyes.

So they sat on, the four, speaking seldom, and always listening for fresh Terrours. And others coming in, the tale got abroad, and none would stay on deck to man the Wheel. Whereupon Trench roused the boy Simpkins, sending him for Brandy; the which he fetched from forward, carrying no light,

Digitized by Google

scoffing at advice, and seeming not to realize what Horrour might be met. Thus, in due time, did they forget the Visitation, as the Brandy overcame them.

As for myself, it was quickly borne in to me by what Means I had been saved; and thereafter, I feared no more. For if Captain Cobb came back in Spirit to save my life, I must needs infer that he, being cognizant of my Acts, approves of them. And this but follows his attitude in life; for he ever held me in the highest regard, trusting me to the full, confiding to me his Secrets, and relying upon my knowledge of Business and Affairs.

Thus doth my heart feel vindicated this morning; though my ostensible Standing be contrary to what I contrive therein. For he, being now a sharer of Omnipotence, seeth all, and knoweth my inward truth; and yet, having lived amongst us, poor Mortals beset on every hand, he is full well aware that man's first Duty lieth towards himself, for the Preservation of that soul which will one Day become Immortal.

August the 11th—The writing of this Relation is a great Relief; my life, I am perswaded, hangs by a thread from day to day; and thus to sit in secret upon a composition, however bootless, is to escape a measure of my racking Alarms. I will now proceed to what took place before.

We sailed from Cadiz on July the 21st., with cargo consisting of 450 barrells of Brandy, 90 bales of Spanish Paper, 50 boxes of Saffron, 100 jars of Sweet-Oil, besides Silk Goodes, being principally black Cloakes and Veils; and the first day, taking a fair and urgent wind, we made good progress towards our port of Destination; namely, Baltimore in the Province of Maryland. The wind continued favorable, and our Vouyage prospered; when, on August the 4th., came Trench, the first mate, to me as I stood alone by the weather rail.

"Touching the matter of that Brandy," said he, speaking low, and with a backward glance, "what think you 'tis best to do?"

And now I must make Explanation of this speech. It happened on the day before our sailing from Cadiz that Captain Cobb was from the ship all day, busy upon matters of final Business. And thus, the Coast being clear, Trench called him a boat from shore; the which having arrived, he and the crew did embezzle five barrells of Brandy from the cargo, and send them off to be sold.

And when I, hearing strange Soundes and coming from the cabin to investigate, did tax them with Iniquity, Trench brazenly admitted it, fixing me the while with eyes that boded Danger. Then did I look about me, and met the evil Glaunces of six others; and a great fear shot through my heart for the safety of my Captain; for well I remembered what bad Blood lay betwixt him and them. Whereupon, with the same calm Boldeness, Trench did propose that I keep silence in the matter, promising to me an eighth share of the Bootey if all went well.

Now, a less thoughtful man would have forgot himself; but I did pause and consider, by which the true Course was opened to me. Here were Concerns that needed looking into; and furthermore, I reasoned, should Captain Cobb learn now of the Embezzlement, he would be put to grave delay in his departure; while, on the other hand, should I hold my Peace until we reached Baltimore, and there inform him, the passage would already have been accomplished, and Justice could be there consummated as well as in the port of Cadiz. Accordingly, with a show of covetous Manners, I acceded to the suggestion; and later, in order to gain their Confidenee, pocketed my share of the plunder, as if I had been one of them.

Thus it will be seen why Trench approached me openly that evening, asking what were best to do. "Trench," I made answer, returning his secret glance in the fashion of one Conspirator to another, "Trench, 'tis a problem. The Manifest is signed; and I will suffer for it when the shortage comes to light."

"Good!" he said. "I have a plan."

Now, by his tone I knew that I should go no further, lest Inquirey entail a legacy of Trouble; but since he waited, as if to feel my temper, I saw that Duty urged me on. "What is your plan?" I asked.

"Kill the Captain and throw him overboard!" whispered Trench in my ear.

At that, my blood froze within me and my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth; for to my peaceable and Christian soul, the thought of Killing has ever been abhorrent. But of this disrelish, which Trench would have scorned as Weakness, I gave no symptom. "'Twould but add a graver Obstacle to our coming to port," I at length found Breath to make objection.

Digitized by Google

"Nay, and we would not come to port!" he urged. "Here's a tight Vessel, eight bold hands, and a cargo of the best Brandy that ever wet a lip! A black Flag is easy painted, and the Spanish Main lies on our lee. 'Twill be nothing to add there a hundred to our Company; and I will be your Captain, and lead you to a life of Freedom! What think you of my plan?" said he.

"I'll have none of it!" I cried, holding check upon the Denunciation that rose to my lips. "Your life of freedom would be as Short as 'twas free; and meanwhile, you'd have booked yourself for the Gallowes, my Friend! Talk of it no more."

"So, 'tis the Gallowes that sticks in your crop!" said he; by which it will be seen how slyly I had choused him. "Let me tell you, my brave Crabtree," went on this rash Villain, "there's no safer course to Fortune than across the Spanish Main, nor one half so expeditious. An you show a chest-full o' gold, no one will pry into your Title; by gad, for a share they'll grant you a Handle to your name!"

"Trench, your clock points fifty years behind the time," said I. "The game of Piracy is long played out; you'll find more to betray you than to follow you." With that, I tipped him a covert wink. "Pray, how are you so sure that I have not already divulged the Enterprise to Cobb?"

This I said to test his faith in me; and well was I rewarded at his answer. "I take you for a wise young man," he made reply. "The Captain is as good as Dead; the Odds are desperate. An you be what I say, you'll hold your tongue!" Whereupon, he closed our discussion with some show of Umbrage, and left me to my unquiet reflections.

AND now, to all equitable men I put it to judge my Policy and procedure; for 'twas not through indecision that I hesitated, but rather through Self-Mastery. First thoughts are seldom wise; and my chief Virtue has ever been the will to pause and deliberate a second time. Whereupon, in this grave matter, I did perceive that Trench had spoke a hard but positive Truth. What Chance, indeed, had one man against seven, or two men against seven? Before God, none at all! And since Captain Cobb were doomed, why vex him with unavailing Alarmes? 'Twere best to trust Fortune, which, by the simple passage of hours, will oft-times frustrate man's basest and most probable Design.

Thus meditating, I betook myself to the Privacey of my room; but there I found neither sleep nor Repose. 'Twas indeed a heavy Problem; for I am an odd, curious fellow at heart; my sentiment's a wayward Chit, tugging ever at the arm of my Reason, and leading me to extremes of conduct most awkward in the Consequence. So, having already resolved to wash my hands of the Anxiety, at dawn I took a sudden turn. And this is what possessed me, too strong to be denied: to go to Cobb, and tell him all! for which I ask no Credit, but bare justice; to the end that, in thus jeopardizing my own Fortune, from motives purely impressional and benevolent, I stretched the Relation Further than might have been expected.

Accordingly, being dressed as I had left the deck the night before, I went out in search of the Captain; and, as I encountered no one in the cabin, it seemed wise, before entering into this Revelation, to look on deck and see if all were well. And no sooner did I emerge from the forward way, than Trench had me by the button-hole!

"'Tis arranged," he whispered. "You are to go below and send Cobb up, saying there's a strange ship in sight. He'll come at that. The rest lies with me!"

"No! No!" I cried. "I'll have no hand in it!"

"Go down!" commanded he, stepping close. "This is no time to raise a breeze!"

"Compel me further, Trench, and I'll cry for help!" said I, seeing that Subterfuge were vain.

Ere I had spoken, he struck me down; for, by nature, the Fist was this man's first resort. Then, whilst he stood above me, "Captain Cobb! On deck, sir!" he bawled out.

Now, it will be seen that no Opportunity was given me to make myself heard. However, had I cried the whole Danger in a word, 'twould have but urged Cobb into it the faster, he being a hot, imprudent man, without Caution or Control. Be that as it may, I lay speechless; and he, coming to the door in answer to that Hail, and seeing me prostrate, did leap on deck and look about him. 'Twas his last look on the *Redemption.* Trench with an iron Bar struck him from behind; he fell, and moved no more.

"Aft, boys!" Trench shouted then; and aft they swarmed, like Vultures to a feast. By my troth, a villainous-favored set they

Digitized by Google

were, unto whome few of your genuine Pirate crews could carry the Buckler! Whereupon Trench, as their new Commander, did make them a speech across Cobb's body, in the manner of one about to lead them to great and glorious Adventures. "And now, my lads," concluded this summary Ruffian, "overboard with the Tyrant! All together, Hearties!" With which he turned, and seeing me, threw back his head and burst into a loud Guffaw. "Ho, ho! Here's Crabtree, who would have no hand in it!" roared he. Thereupon, he grasped me rudely by the neck, in a raw, playful Mood; and others entering into the frolic, I was dragged and thrown upon Cobb's body. "Lay hold!" they cried. "Lay hold, or overboard you go with him!" And so, by the brute Force of arms, was I put to it; for which act, I trow, God will in His own time burn them briskly in the Fires of Hell. Then was Cobb's body raised on high, and, without ado, pitched into the Sea.

Touching that hour of Crime, worse remaines to be told. They fell to drinking; and with Brandy by the barrell, and hearts of Lust and beastliness, they did contrive a Baccanal from which, in sooth, the gay god himself would have retired in Shame! And in the midst of it, turning heart-sick to the rail, I thence beheld no other than Captain Cobb, swimming lustily in our Wake! Perchance, the cold Water had revived him; but from whatever cause, there indeed swam he, nigh keeping pace with us; for, the wind being then light, the ship made scant headway.

At this surprising Sight, I gave a shout; upon which, Trench leading, the diabolical and motley Company did gather beside me. "Ahoy, in the wake!" cried Trench. "Here's a pleasant Passage to you, and a safe Berth amongst the fishes!" Whereupon, with much merriment, did these hardened rascals drink a Portion to the Captain swimming.

Ere I had formed my mind as to the advisability of speech with Trench, the Errour of Cobb's hasty nature intervened. Errour, I say; for had he answered aught that pleased their fancy, they being then of an inconsistent drunken Temper, some measure of mercy might have befallen him. But no: "To the Devil with you all!" cried he, shaking a fist at the departing Vessel. "The red Curses of Hell follow you!" Saying which, he ceased from swimming, and turned his back upon Life and hope.

"Now, damn his Soul!" bellowed Trench, his face flaming with anger. "Methinks he offers a pretty mark! What say you, boys? A double share of our first Bootey, to him who bags the Game!" They needed but the suggestion; close upon his words, their shots rang out; from which inhuman Sport I was fain to turn away. But soon a shout acquainted me with the End; and as I looked again, he sank, throwing up his hands. Thus died a Brave but stubborn man.

These are the Events of six days gone. That day, and well into the night, the Orgy reigned; the boy Simpkins fetching and carrying with alacrity; concerning whome 'tis but Fair to state that he, being busy about the morning coffee, saw nothing of the Murder, and was forgotten in what came after. 'Twas a luckey chance, by my Faith, that the wind died——

I hear Trench without; I have been at this too long.

August the 12th—The Voice first affrighted us on the second day of Trench's command. It chanced at supper that, it being dark and stormy above, a maudlin Anxiety did brew within them; the talk ran upon Gales and Dangers, and what were best to do; which discussion, drawing forth contrary advice, did pass into a Brawl of words, with much ill-temper and violence of Expression. Thereupon, in a lull when all were drinking, came this awful Voice, which, by the power of God, did seeme to shake the cabin walls!

"*Trench, drink deep!*" it wailed. "*Your Doom is sealed!*"

All present there leaped up, in deep and nameless Consternation. "Who spoke?" demanded Trench, his hand on his knife.

"An I know it, 'twas the Voice of Jeremiah Cobb!" said I, my teeth making havoc with my words. Trench wheeled and made as if to come at me, but ere he had left his Tracks, the Voice spoke again.

"*The red Curses of Hell be upon you!*" it screamed, cutting like a Knife into the hearts of us who stood spell-bound.

"His last words!" gasped the sailor Thomas. "God forgive me! 'Twas my bullet did the Deed!"

"*All are equally Guilty!*" said the Voice a third time.

What followed then, may well be imagined; 'twas Pandemonium indeed. Some did ransack the cabin, others rushed on

Digitized by Google

deck; for Trench swore vehemently that a Hoax had been perpetrated. But in my heart I felt the Truth; and they soon came to it, gathering affrighted about the cabin-lanthern, the helmsman calling loudly from above for a man to keep him company; the which raising no Volenteer, he joined us, and left the ship to steer herself. There did we gaze into each other's faces, speaking little, well knowing what dreadful Thing had come to pass. And how it went in those guilt-laden Consciences, I saw in divers ways; drink ebbed within them, their boisterous Spirits fled; none slept that night on the *Redemption*.

SUCH was the beginning of these nights of Torment beyond any mortal fear; for we know not what moment a Voice may speake to us from other Worlds. Twice since the night of which I wrote, has Cobb's ghost been seen; once 'twas upon the Forecastle, once in the starboard alley-way. The men exhibit varied Tempers; some repenting and muttering together against the prospect of further Crime; others brave still for the life of Freedom, albeit 'tis a sorry liberty where Ghostes walk; Trench morose, apprehensive, cowed by night and Bold by day; and all, betwixt brandy and Desperation, nigh driven out of their wits. For myself, I have sundry consolations; but chiefly, my Conscience is at rest. My acts have been well-warrented; and in the light of succeeding Events——

August the 13th—What I was about to say, is of no Weight. Trench keeps an eye upon me; although I tell him that my bills must be gone over, he suspects me of a private Business. Often have I pondered on it, why Trench so favors me; for I am perswaded it springs not from the heart; his Trust laggeth well behind his Indulgeance. 'Tis plain he findeth here a Character beyond his grasp, and knoweth not how to gain the Mastery of me. This shall continue, an I gauge myself aright.

The boy Simpkins is a pitiful case. Time was, I deemed him lacking, in that he had no fear of the Voice; for his blasphemey and hardihood were noted by all. But to-day he gave me his Confidence, saying that, night by night, as he considered this deep and awfull Warning, a secret terrour grew upon him, so that he feared his mind was giving way. Thereupon he wept sorely, begging for counsil and Delivereance from this tragic Doom; which appeal did affect me mightily, and the more so since I could extend him no consolation, beyond the reminder of his Innocence. And verily, I do believe him, that his wits have flown; for 'twas but the moment gone I did observe him laughing to himself; a sure token of Lunacy, as is well known.

Under such apprehension and Surveillance, I can not embark upon so extensive an expression of thought as I would wish. Dangers hedge me about; and this is true, likewise, of our more general situation; for with Mutiny heavy in our midst, with passion loose from a week's Carousal, and with the dread of this Visitation like an incursive Plague upon our souls, 'tis a chap-fallen band of Pirates bound on the *Redemption* for the Spanish Main.

August the 15th—A fearful storm has beset us; we are in sore Straites. At nightfall appeared a dense black cloud, from which, on a sudden, came wind of appalling Violence, throwing us upon the beam-ends and rending all our sailes. Trench, the while this was on foot, lay Drunk in the cabin; and the sailor English, who by chance was sober, he having been this morning attacked by Visions and Delusions, the which dismayed him to Abstineance, did bring the schooner into the wind. She rideth easy, but the Gale increases apace; I fear we are in the toils of a Huricane. God preserve us——

August the 16th—Dawn has but now broken; if, by my faith, such a Glimmer could rightly be called dawn! Never did I behold a scene so angrey and Alarming; the ship is gulfed amid mountaineous Waves. One point is gained: the men have left their Cups. A Premonition of our end affrights me, and writing thus, doth bring it acutely before my eyes. I can not bear it: I will now suspend this Relation—perhaps for ever!

August the 18th. Evening—We are saved! And when I consider that near Peril, and the crisis and occasion of our Delivereance, I am smitten anew with the exceeding mercy of Providence. Without hesitation, I take it to myself that we escaped; for an impartial view of our State will disclose it, that none save me deserves Cobb's succour; while, to confirm my ground, I have the

Digitized by Google

record of his previous Subvention in my behalf. Thus am I a twice-saved man; which, 'tis plain, purporteth some Trust and Expectation.

And now to relate the way of it, strange beyond any mortal Adventure. It must be known, that for two nights and a day the Huricane raged upon us, coming ever from the same quarter, and mounting hourly when, in sooth, hour by hour we thought it could increase no more. Then, as the second night fell, was this amazing Wind suddenly augmented twofold; nothing to match it had been seen by any man of us; and verily, it did appear that some Supernatural and malevolent power were in it, intent and frantic for our Souls. In that hour, clinging arduously to the rail, was I several times blown lengthwise from the deck, so that my heels flew higher than my Head; and this with such pernicity and force, that I was hard put to it to retain my hold.

Judge, then, of our Astonishment when, in a whiff, the wind was gone! A sinister Calm had fallen upon the waters; on everey hand the Waves still tossed mast-high, rearing and vanishing in the Dusk; and the roar of this Hell's Caulderon did smite upon our ears, thus abruptly released from the Weight of the wind, with shocks louder than a thousand Cannon. Awfull beyond measure was so swift a Proximity and drawing in of Death; at which Trench, the first of them to cry *peccavi*, did emit a mighty groane.

"'Tis the End of the world!" cried he. "Have mercy upon us!"

This was the more affecting, coming thus from our erstwhile skeptical and Godless commander; it gave tongue to the common Mood, and each did sink upon his knees in an attitude of Prayer. And in this posture, my head being bowed, a Screame from behind did chill the very Marrow of my bones.

"Look! Look! Cobb's ghost!"

Then did I lift my eyes and behold for the first time that dread Spirit. 'Twas bound about the Head, as had been reported; being in other ways so like the Original that had I not with horrour perceived the boy Simpkins through its Bodey, I would have sworn Cobb in the life had but stepped on deck. Silently the Spectre did advance, raising its arm in a well-remembered gesture.

"Off your knees, Fools!" it cried. "Look to the ship! Soon will the wind be upon you from the opposite Quarter! Be prepared!" Saying which, it receded and vanished from mortal Sight!

Now, this Warning was given in the nick of time. Little, indeed, could we accomplish with the Schooner, beyond aiding her off with the Rudder, whereas we would have hindered her; but for ourselves, it saved our Lives; since to be caught upon the lee by such a wind would have blown us all into Eternity. And, as the Phantom said, no sooner did we gain the opposite Rail, and there establish ourselves, than the wind did burst upon us from this side with new Fury, as if to rend our Soules and bodies in twain. But the ship, having fallen off from the first wind, did now point manfully into this; and we, being safe on the Windward, did all come through the Gale.

SINCE then, a day has passed. I have closely observed the Men; they be a thoughtfull crew. The season ripens for my Master-Stroke. I will wait another day; 'tis best to let the Realization and effect of this Miracle take deeper root.

August the 19th. Afternoon—Scant time is given me to enter our latest Danger. At noon, the wind being then fresh and on the Beam, we made out a Frigate to the windward; which bearing down upon us, Trench, with a most freakish and wanton Resolution, did crowd on sail and bear off likewise to escape. Now, in these times and Waters, such doings admit of but one interpretation; 'tis the Stamp and seal of Piracy. Thereupon, I took issue with Trench, advising him to furl his Insolence and wait upon the turn of Fortune. But no; he would listen to no soft-hearted course. Now doth he already see the Folly of it; for the Frigate gains on us apace. I fear she will come within gun-shot before darkness falls.

Later—A dreadful thing has happened; I have fled to my room. Cobb's Ghost is again abroad. A moment since, I stood with Trench upon the quarter-deck, observing the Frigate's approach, and, night being then close at hand, we had Hopes, by showing no light and tacking swiftly, to avoid her in the Obscurity and make our Slip. Thus waiting, on a sudden from the helmsman beside us rang out a blood-curdling cry.

"The Ghost!" he screamed, dashing then from the Wheel, and leaving us without response or explanation.

Thereupon we strained our eyes, and,

Digitized by Google

with hearts of Water, did behold the Spectre appear there in the helmsman's place, whirling the spokes as a living Body would, and steering like a tried seaman. Verily, to see that, my hair did bristle on my Head! One instant I held my Ground; the eyes of the Demon were balls of Fire, its mouth shot Flames at me; and, staying for no more, I fled. And now no one durst go near the Thing; and the ship sails on with a Shade at the helm! I hear Voices——

Later—'Twas Trench, calling for Volenteers to take the wheel; for in this interval, the Frigate drawing close aboard and throwing a shot in our direction, our spectral Helmsman did bring the *Redemption* into the wind. But, though Trench cursed them high and low, none would offer to go with him; some, indeed, saying that the Ghost had acted wisely, doing what he, Trench, should hours since have done; upon which, by necessity of his brave Speech, was Trench obligated to venture alone. Dusk having fallen, he was quickly lost to View; but, ere long, did stagger back, falling amongst us as if death-stricken, albeit he groaned lustily.

"His face bleedes!" cried the boy Simpkins. "How fared you aft, sir?"

"Ask me not!" Trench answered, from behind his hands. "A Devil guards him! It rose from the deck by his side, and struck me down!"

But there remained no time to dwell upon this new Horrour; for a hail came from the Frigate: "Ship ahoy! What Game is this you play?"

Trench being still in abeyance, I was about to make reply, when, from the stern, that ghostly Voice did forestall me!

"Frigate ahoy!" it cried. "An you send me a boat with ten Armed men, I'll show you the strangest Game ever played!"

Thereupon, in utter Bewilderment of mind, I came below to enter it in my Relation; to what purpose, I know not; but chiefly because, in this conjuncture and Chaos, I must turn my hand to something or go mad. Was ever Exigeancy more pressing: a ship commanded by a Ghost; and this Voice, which hath already driven us nigh to Distraction, at length undoing us! 'Tis beyond Record or experience——

I hear the sound of Oars; the boat has come from the Frigate. Before God, the Voice converses with them! A dreadfull thought chilleth me: what if they, too, be of the Spirit world? Now steps upon——

'Tis our men, fighting amongst themselves to gain the cabin. I saw them drag in Trench. The Ghosts have attacked them! That was Cobb's laugh! We are lost——

I will burn this Relation. No, I will wait; it may be useful——

AFTERWORD, BY CAPTAIN JEREMIAH COBB

THUS ends that Rogues Jurnal, that willing Pirate and Cowardley artist Crabtree. Now I am no Writer, but I can Fight. That was what I liked in Trench. As for Crabtree, I could not Stomach him. I kept it for a Curiosity, and he is Dead and Trench with him for aught I know. 'Twill begile Someone's time when I am Gone.

He knew full well why Trench befriended him—because he was the only man aboard who could Figger by the Sun. To rede what he calls his Relation, 'tis a Clever work and many who never saw salt Watter would weep salt Tears for him. his Facts be there, but slightly Warpt. For Instance he neglecks to State that when the Brandy flowed he took his Share. Which was Lucky for me Because it putt them all away that morning save Simpkins. They did not Shoot me, I Duckt. the Wind died and I swum abord, Simpkins lett me through the Panthrey into the Lazarete. Every night I went on Deck and Haunted them. I told Crabtree to write the Jurnal, well knowing Something Rare would come of it. he had a Gift of Language, but thought too much upon Himself. Such men never Lead.

The Fools might have Drownd themselves in the Huricane. tis good enough to Pray in its proper Ocasion, but One Huricane could soon Stop their Repenting throates. Crabtree says he saw Simpkins through Me,—'twas indeed a Miracle!

The young Leutenant that come abord was a good Boy. He sayd he thought we was a Plague ship, seeing only One man at the Rail. I soon Explaned and he called up his Men, but our crew rann like Sheep. He askt me if I wanted men to Finish the Voyage. I sayd, No. Give me Powder and Shot, and push Off. He laught and sayd, I would not be in your Boots. I sayd, you Navy Sprouts dont know what Fighting is.

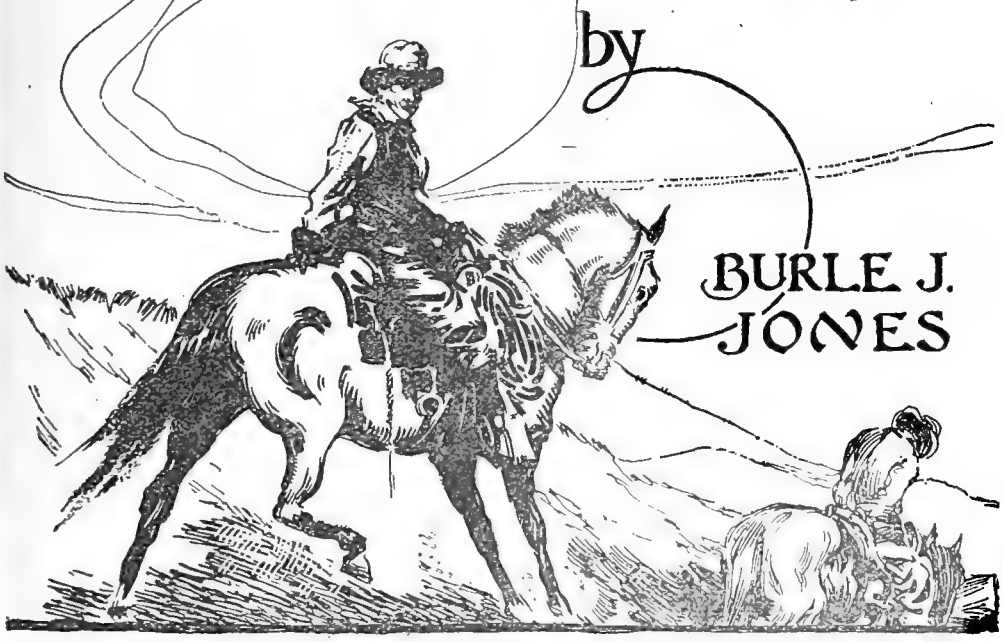
I putt Trench and Crabtree in Irons, the Rest of them was then a good Crew. I took them Home and lockt up Trench for Twenty years, but I lett Crabtree go, he was such a Meen Skunk anyway.

Digitized by Google

THE VAGABOND

by

BURLE J. JONES



IN HIS exceedingly comfortable bachelor apartment Herbert Bradley, known in his profession as "The Pink Cherub," "The Red Devil" and by various other pleasant nicknames, was making a leisurely toilet, when his telephone rang peremptorily.

He took down the receiver. "Hello. Yes, this is Bradley. Oh, that you, Deacon? Want to see me at once? All right, I'll be over right after breakfast."

An hour later he appeared at the office of the Pinkley Detective Bureau and was warmly greeted by the Chief, a big, square-jawed, keen-eyed man with hair turning gray about the temples.

"I have just received a request to take up a rather unusual case," began the Chief, "and as some of the territory it covers used to be home to you I thought you might suggest a clue that would warrant us in taking it up. It's a big job and carries a pot of money."

"The pot of money sounds interesting. Tell me about it."

"Maybe you read in the papers about six months ago of a peculiar robbery and murder committed near Rice in Arizona?"

"I saw something about it, but didn't pay much attention. Murder is out of my line. Give me the details."

"Well, there was a fellow there named Burroughs who had a little ranch and kept a road-house. One day a rich tourist stopped for the night on his way back to Phoenix. He was murdered—skull crushed like an egg-shell. They found his body a week later. Burroughs was gone, bed and baggage. They have never been able to find a trace of him."

"Well, what have they found?"

"They have been over the back track of this man Burroughs and find that he used to punch cows for the Menard outfit on the Verde. Wasn't very well liked there. I knew you had been there and thought you might be able to place him. Worked there under the name of Peabody."

"Ah! Any marks?"

"None given. Description says: 'Tall, swarthy, coarse black hair, small hazel eyes. No mustache or beard when last seen. Eyebrows heavy and meeting over the nose.'"

Digitized by Google

Bradley sat for some moments in thought. Then he said: "Peabody was with the Menard outfit when I was there as a cub in the cow business. Whenever I think of the devil I see Peabody. He was somewhat like that description, but I wouldn't recognize him from it. However, it was twelve years ago that I knew him. The boys had no use for him, and as I was a newcomer, and green at that, they put us together a lot. We rode together and we slept together, and that man got on my nerves like chills and fever. He was plain, low-down devil.

"It's funny, though, that they didn't describe any marks. Guess they didn't get a close inspection. This Peabody I knew had a mark on him that no one could ever forget. We went together to Payson one time with a bunch of cows and he got drunk and, as a result, a bad case of delirium tremens.

"I had to nurse him, and when he fought he tore the shirt-sleeve away from his left forearm. It was tattooed close to the elbow, and had some details I never forgot. When he came to he asked me if he had been bad and had torn his clothing or had it taken off. He looked at me close, and I said no.

"He finally got to crossing over the hills to a Mexican settlement, and they got after him for some unsavory work and drove him off. Now, that is what I know about Peabody, Deacon. So far as I am concerned he is just a bad smell. Who are you going to send after him?"

"I am going to offer the job to you."

"You are very kind, old fellow, but I don't want to meet the gent again. Anyway, I don't like to go out after these killers. I did a breed out on the reservation last time I was out, for no reason on earth except that he was bound to do me first. It has been a load on my mind ever since."

The "Deacon" laughed pleasantly. "I know that you are gun-shy, Red, but you seem to be the logical person to send out on this trail."

Bradley sank a little deeper into his chair and chewed up the remnants of his cigar. Then he picked up his hat and rose to go, saying as he did so: "If you are determined to send me out after this fellow, Deacon, you had better wire at once to the Mexican Government and get our representative to secure cast-iron extradition papers covering his various aliases and that tattoo-mark. I'll have to grow a little beard, anyway."

The "Deacon" looked up from his papers with some surprise. "How do you know he is in Mexico?"

"I think I know within fifty miles of where he is. I have heard him talk a lot about a certain place in Mexico. He was always hoping that he could save enough money to buy a ranch there. He will never buy a ranch. He can't let the booze alone long enough for that. But a fellow like him never forgets where he wants to go."

II

A MONTH later a grimy and much frazzled individual approached the ranch-house of "Don" Martin, an American cattle owner in the Province of Sonora, Mexico. He had been hiding about the country among the peons for some days, unknown and little heeded, for vagrants are not uncommon on either side of the border. His color and clothing served at once to indicate that he was an alien, for his hair and frowzy, unkempt beard were red, and his clothing, though shoddy and ill fitting, was unmistakably American. He approached hesitatingly.

"Please, mum," he said to the swarthy dame who came to the door, "could I see the boss?"

She was accustomed to tramps of various nationalities, and though she could not understand what he said, she immediately turned about into the house and came forth presently with a goodly offering of food.

He took it without protest and, as he ate, asked again, this time in Spanish, for the proprietor. His request was answered from behind by a man's voice, and he turned about to see the ranchman himself approaching.

He was a man of middle age and medium height, strong, sinewy and alert, just the type of American that one meets on the frontiers of every country. "What can you be wantin' the boss for?" he asked pleasantly. "Looks to me like you have got what you are most likely to want."

Then he stopped and viewed the shabby figure with a growing amusement which finally boomed forth in a hearty laugh.

Digitized by Google

"Well, I'll be doggoned if you don't beat anything yet! We get a considerable variety down here, but you are the sorriest yet by a large majority. Come in when you get through and we'll discuss your important business with the 'boss.'"

So he passed inside, and when the newcomer had finished his food he followed.

"Well, *amigo*, what do you want—a place to hide? If you do, you can find it anywhere in these parts."

The other straightened his bent back with a jerk. Then as his eyes met those of the cowman they wavered and fell, and his shoulders drooped again. "I reckon I'm well hid all right. But I guess I'll have to ask you for work."

This declaration brought forth another guffaw. "Want to work, eh? Well, now, I'll bet that does hurt your feelings! First time you ever made a request like that, I guess. If I was up in the States I'd say you was a tramp, but you have had quite a hike, so it's better to call you a vagabond. What did you do—just lift somebody's watch?"

"It don't matter," said the man hastily. "You say I'm safe here, so let's talk work."

"Can you ride?"

"Shore can."

"Where did you learn?"

"Arizona, Wyoming, Montana."

"Is that all? Well, you ought to be a good cowman. If you'll promise to stay on your horse and not go to sleep I'll give you a try at forty dollars per, Mex. I need riders just now, but that's all I have to pay for good Mexican *vaqueros*. It means about twenty dollars, American money. Give me some name that I can keep track of you by on the books. You tend to business and we'll not ask any questions."

IN THE morning the Vagabond found half a dozen horses in the corrals, and as he came out Martin called from the office and told him to select the one he would ride. He picked out a rangy buckskin, and a Mexican, who was already mounted, grinned as he caught it skillfully with a lariat and tied it firmly to a hitching-post. Then he brought forth a saddle and put it on the shivering, straddle-legged cayuse with equal skill, and then left it to attend breakfast, which was served by a native woman.

As they finished, Martin came in and said: "My daughter and I will ride with you to the cow-camp and take these horses. They need some extras."

The Vagabond put on his chaps and spurs and fared forth to mount his horse. A moment later he was picking himself up out of the dust and unconsciously brushing his clothes as though they were really valuable. Then he heard sounds of mirth and looked up to see Martin and his daughter mounted outside and laughing at his predicament.

A deep blush stained his cheeks beneath his rough beard as he stared awkwardly at his audience. Then he felt a sudden resentment. "Was you-all a-laughin' at me?" he asked plaintively.

"Oh, no," Martin replied cheerfully, "we was just a-laughin' at that funny horse."

The Vagabond took up the long rope trailing after the animal and snubbed it to a post, urging the buckskin up until he was drawn close. Then he approached slowly, wound up the rope, loosened the hitch, seized the cheek-piece of the bridle and swung into the saddle like a flash. The broncho gave a wild bawl and flew into the air, circling, turning, twisting and running, but all to no avail. The man rode easily and allowed a free rein. When the siege was over he rode to the gate. "Air you ready to start?" he asked casually.

"I was figuring that we would have to rope another horse for you," replied Martin, "but I see you can get service out of ole Buck. You are the only man on the place up to date that can stay on top of him, barrin' myself, and I haven't rode him for two years. He is both old and ornery."

The Vagabond said nothing, and they turned the horses out and headed them away toward the open range. After they had gone some distance, Martin turned suddenly away, saying that he wanted to ride a certain wash and would join them later.

Thus was the Vagabond left to ride alone with the daughter. He had previously noted her perfect horsemanship, and now, upon studying her as she rode at some distance from him, saw that she was not only equipped with a good saddle, rope and regular cow-outfit, but that she carried a good-sized six-shooter at her waist, and a belt of cartridges. She was a perfect figure of grace and self-possession, and the man again felt a hot flush of crimson at his own disreputable appearance.

Digitized by Google

"Have you been in this country long, Mr. White?" she asked pleasantly, reining her horse over to his and eyeing him closely.

"Only about a month, Miss Martin," he replied, looking away. "This is my first job."

She laughed a little as she asked: "Do you mean your first job anywhere, or just here?"

He looked up quickly to find her studying his face. "First job here," he said. "It's a fine country, ain't it?" he added, turning away.

"Yes, it is a fine country for some things. Do you think you will stay here permanently?"

"I figger," he said carelessly, "that it'll be safer here for a year or so. By that time I'll know how it strikes me." Again he felt her eyes upon him and they fell silent for some time.

Then they came to the top of a ridge and she pointed out the valley of the Yaqui River, dotted with cattle. Their roundup camp showed plainly not a mile ahead. As they started on she rode close again. "Hadn't you better tell me what you are here for and why you choose to look like a tramp?"

He was considerably surprised at this unexpected question, but he answered readily: "A feller can't hide his trade, miss. If he is a bo, he will shorely look like a bo, won't he?"

But she interrupted: "It's too late now to take that tack, Mr. White. You see, I surprised you this morning when you were brushing your clothes in the corral. Tramps don't brush their clothes by instinct. You are here for some purpose. Perhaps it would be best if you told me."

He saw it was too late to retreat. "Miss Martin," he said, looking at her squarely and studying her face as he spoke, "I may as well tell you that I am here on business. Just what the nature of it is to be is still uncertain. I've got to get into that camp and get acquainted. I've got to do a lot of things before I can say anything definite. I'm quite certain I can trust you and I'll explain later if the matter interests you then. Will you give me your word meanwhile not to say anything of what we have discussed or what you suspect, even to your father?"

"It has been my own fault that I found it out," she said simply, "and I will do as you ask, if you will assure me that your presence does not mean any harm to my father."

"That's a go," he answered heartily. "I mean to work honestly by your father and I mean no harm to him, even if any were possible. He has nothing to do with my work, except to act as my pseudo-employer. We'll shake on that."

And thus they came up to the mess-wagon of the roundup, where Martin was waiting for them. Together they rode out in the direction the cook said the foreman had taken and found him some miles from camp, helping round up the Martin animals. "This man's name is White, Mr. Palmer," said the owner by way of introduction.

The foreman looked him over carefully, noting that he was riding the ugly buckskin. "Reckon you won't have to learn much, Mr. White," he said, "seein' you are able to stay on top of ole Buck."

IT WAS a week later that the Vagabond, riding near to the foreman as they came into camp with the day's roundup, asked casually: "Who is that tall feller, third man over, on the pinto hawss?"

"Name is Morse," replied the boss laconically. "Why?"

"He is a good rider," said the other. "Wonder if you'd mind sending me out with him?"

"You-all are shore welcome to his comp'ny," retorted Palmer. "He's not exactly a sociable party."

Nothing more was said, but in the morning he sent them out together to scour a particularly difficult piece of country. They were a queer pair, riding together, yet each of himself, doing their work well and skillfully, yet not speaking half a dozen words during the day. Covertly the Vagabond watched his companion's movements in riding, in mounting, in handling his pony, and always his memory showed him familiar things that brought interest and satisfaction.

A few days later Morse was riding neck and neck with a particularly refractory steer when his horse stepped into a hole and fell headlong, throwing him violently upon the ground. The Vagabond was beside him in a moment. The wristband of the man's coarse shirt was entirely gone, having

Digitized by Google

apparently been caught on the saddle-horn. What the Vagabond saw brought only a slight triumph, as his suspicions had already amounted almost to a certainty.

He hastily brought his canteen and bathed the fallen man's head. Soon he stirred. Then his right hand went instinctively to his left sleeve, then to the gun at his hip. He sat up, staring at his companion with open defiance.

"There now," said the latter soothingly. "You-all will be all right in a minute. You had a bad fall."

"Who tore my shirt?"

"Reckon it was done on the saddle. But that ain't noth'n if you ain't hurt. Your hawss has shore broke a laig."

III

THE NEXT day the Vagabond had gathered his cattle and was proceeding leisurely toward the place appointed for his meeting with Morse, when Miss Martin came from a nearby arroyo and rode straight up to him. "Well," she asked directly, "what have you learned so far?"

And he answered as directly: "I came here on a man-hunt, Miss Martin, and I have confirmed my suspicions that he is here. It remains simply to arrest him and take him back to the States."

"Is he a thief?"

"He is a thief and a murderer of the most brutal sort. I am rather surprised that this sort of thing should interest you, Miss Martin, for the men are a bad lot and I presume you have no friends among them."

She straightened instantly and there was a tinge of anger in her voice as she answered. "I have no friends here, Mr. White. I am utterly alone, and, I might add, utterly out of place. Perhaps that is why I take so much interest in what is going on here. It is my only occupation. Also, I thought your work might affect father."

"I have already told you that it did not," replied the Vagabond.

The young woman spoke with amazing frankness: "There are spies about, looking into the matter of driving cattle across the border. My father does that sometimes, because they bring better prices in the States. But the authorities are trying to stop it."

"That is entirely out of my line," said the man, looking at her with some admiration for her fearlessness. "I will sure forget it. Anyway, I am not hired by the Government."

"How will you take your man, Mr. White, and which one is it, if you don't mind telling?" she asked with some anxiety.

"I generally let matters shape themselves. I don't believe you care to know who the man is, Miss Martin. How do you entertain yourself down here in this country?"

She permitted the change of subject and they talked long of affairs in "God's Country." She had been educated in a seminary in New England. Her mother had died and her father had married a Mexican woman when the daughter was away at her last year in school, thus severing almost completely all the bonds that bound her to home and to this frontier world. She longed for human company and friendship, for social position and for those finer things generally which go to make up the life of a normal, educated woman.

He told her of New York and of the big things going on in her own country, and she rode beside him with eager ears until the cattle gathered by Morse came to view. Then she bade him a reluctant *adios* and turned abruptly away.

He watched her until she was lost from view.

"MORSE," said the foreman, when they reached camp, "Miss Martin left a note here to-day from the Old Man. I've got to send an answer to hit. I cain't spare you to-morrow, but we will be through with this country by night, and you'll go down next day. Come back to the springs in Sand Coulee basin. We'll pitch next camp there. I've got to ride the Santa Rita Canyon and it will take two days."

The next morning the Vagabond approached the foreman and asked for his time. "I'll stay to-day and help ride the Cactus Flats with Morse," he said, "but I'd shore like to get off by evenin'."

"All right," said Palmer readily. "To-morrow will see us through the rush and I'll have to turn some of the bunch off anyway."

"What are you quittin' for," asked Morse as they rode away. "Gettin' too rich?"

Digitized by Google

"Yep," replied the Vagabond wearily. "I ain't used to too much coin and I shore do pine for a good old spree and a change of country."

"Reckon you won't be goin' back to the States," grinned the other, and that ended their conversation for the day.

They had finished by mid-afternoon and the Vagabond started at once for the home ranch. At a ford he dismounted and went into a mesquite thicket from which he emerged a moment later, removing a bundle of papers and an ugly six-shooter from a square can. He buckled on the revolver and put the papers into his pocket, then remounted and rode to the ranch, reaching there at dusk. Leaving his horse at the corrals, he applied at the office and was admitted by Martin himself.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the cowman. "Did you bring me a note from Palmer?"

"No. It will be here to-morrow. I came to discuss other business."

"Want your time, eh?"

"Wrong again. You can keep what is due me, Mr. Martin. I am being paid by other parties. I want to take one of your good men away and I thought I would explain the situation to you. I presume you read about that murder and robbery near Rice in Arizona last year? Well, I have come here after the party that did the job. I have all of the papers and I want you to look them over so as to be sure that I am on the square."

Martin began to examine the papers. Then he looked up in surprise. "Bradley? Bert Bradley? So that's you, is it? Well, I'm glad to shake with you. I've heard a lot about your work, and if there is a man I admire in your line it's you. Put her here!"

So they shook hands solemnly and Bradley told him of how he had traced and found his man. He also made arrangements to keep his horse until the job was done, and explained that he expected to surprise and arrest his man in the morning.

ON THE following day Morse came down the trail, riding his big mount easily at a swinging trot. As usual he was glowering straight before him, morose, silent, ugly. As he came to the ford a horse splashed across and dashed up the slope to meet him. It was Miss Martin. "Good morning, Mr. Morse," she said cheerily.

The man's eyes lit up with sudden animation as he halted his horse and surveyed the girl beside him lingeringly, insultingly, until she turned a fiery red beneath his gaze. "Don't let me detain you," she said hastily, urging her horse forward as though eager to release the tension. "I thought I would just ride with you and talk."

"Sha'n't we stop and talk here?" sneered the man. "It is shore fine to be received and entertained by a fine young lady like you."

"No, no," she replied quickly. "I just wanted to ask you a question. Suppose you had done some awful crime, and the detectives were after you. What would you do? Would you fight, or would you let them arrest you?"

Instantly his face changed. Fierce hatred distorted his brutal features. "If I was chased and cornered," he said slowly, "I'd kill every son of a gun that came in range!" Then his quick passion passed and his eyes came back to the girl. "What makes you talk like that? Have you been readin' some blood-and-thunder story, sweetie?"

"No," she cried, pale with terror. "But I wanted to know, because they are really after you. A detective came from the States yesterday. He has all the papers for your arrest and extradition. He knows who you are and where you are. He is at the ranch now and means to take you when you get there. I heard him tell father last night. Don't wait! Go! Please go quick!"

Again the face of Morse changed. Into his eyes came a hunted look with the combined hatred and fear of one who knows the arm of the law. He forgot the girl beside him—forgot everything but the desire to get away, the lust for the blood of those who hunted him. With one hand on his gun he reined his horse sharply with the other and dashed away up the stream, keeping close to the cover of the brush. The girl watched him a moment, then spurred rapidly away toward the house.

IV

A LITTLE later a twig crackled in the brush and the Vagabond came forth stupidly, uncertainly, like one in a trance, and seated himself on a stone near the stream. Long he sat in silent meditation, head in hands, now glancing

Digitized by Google

toward the house, now over the course the fugitive had taken. "I'll be teetotally slambunctified," he muttered aloud, "if that don't grab anything I ever heard of! That's the first secret I ever told a woman. It'll be the last!"

Then he roused himself with a sudden resolution, went to a distant thicket and brought forth his horse, mounted and rode away diagonally across the hills.

He had in mind several towns at which Morse might stop—Trinidad, Pesquerita. But they were too close, and he concluded, as he watched him from the hills, that he would probably cross the range to San Marcia. So he cut across the steep range and headed straight for that town. Arriving almost at dark he put up his horse and loitered about, apparently only an aimless vagabond, but always alert for the arrival of his prey. After nightfall Morse came and the Vagabond watched him carefully until satisfied as to his destiny, a tiny drinking-house.

Entering this, the Vagabond quickly ordered a bottle of mescal, paid for it, went back to a distant table, poured most of the contents of the bottle out on the stone floor and filled his cup. When Morse entered he was sprawling across the crude table, staring about with bleared, uncertain eyes, and did not seem to see the newcomer. He surmised that Morse would have little or no money, and knew that only his desire for drink would drive him to seek friends.

Nor was he long disappointed, for he saw that his recent range partner recognized him at once. For some time the man hesitated, licking his lips and looking hungrily at the bottle on the table beside the Vagabond. Finally appetite won the battle and he came forward. "I thought you would jest about be drunk by now, White," he said. "When d'you get here?"

"Why, hello, Mor's," cried the Vagabond, striving unsuccessfully to rise. "D'you all—hic—quit t' ole man, too? Have a drink." He pushed the bottle toward the newcomer and bawled loudly for whisky and another cup. "Whisky 'th better, beer 'th better, mescal 'th better here than t'ith over th' range. Comth in by t' boat."

Morse drank his liquor eagerly, talking but little, barely enough to keep his host in a good humor. The Vagabond was indeed loquacious. He chuckled over stealing a horse and saddle from Martin. He babbled of the States. He cursed the cattle. He hated the Mexicans. He deplored his roving habits, his poverty. He longed for sudden and unexpected wealth.

"Theen an ole paper up at Martin's," he babbled, "tellin' 'bout some feller findin' a big pot o' money up in Arizona. In the Mogollons, I gueth. No, Superstition—yeth, Superstition. Right in Ole Superstition Mountain. Jest my luck. Been there lots o' times. Been all over that ole mountain. Never found any. Thith feller found a whole pot of ith. Why, what th' matter? What ith I talkin' 'bout? Money, money on Superstition Mountain. Fifty thouthand dollarth, all in money."

Morse had risen and was shaking him angrily. "You lie!" he shouted. "You're drunk! You never seen that in any paper!"

"Me, liar?" queried the Vagabond. "Ain't no liar. Theen ith, I tell you. Like t' been there. Yeth thir, found it right on Ole Superstition."

"Where? What part of the mountain did it say they found that fifty thousand?" Morse leaned far across the table and shook the drunken man.

"Where? On Superstition Mountain, thath where. Fifty thousand dollars. Oh, no! Not me! I ain't lucky. Been all over ith, bottom t' top. From th' sand-washes at t' bottom to th' ole caves an' mines at th' top. I don't find it. I ain't lucky."

"No, no! Where? Whereabouts on the mountain did they find it? On the top? On the sides? At the bottom?" Morse was on his feet now, and he shook his companion with renewed vigor and cursed him roundly.

The Vagabond staked everything on one last throw. "Where?" he queried mysteriously. "In a ole deserted mine, all cave in, north side, way up. Been there th' dothen times m'self. I don't find it. Oh, no, I ain't lucky."

Morse had dropped into his chair, a limp, haggard man, his face ashen, his hands clasping at his throat. When he looked up the Vagabond was staring past him into space. Then he was speaking again, and as he spoke his eyes met those of Morse and held them.

"Peabody, I used to know you on the Verde. You threatened to kill me once, just because I was good to you and nursed your rotten carcass through one of the

Digitized by Google

worst cases of delirium I ever saw. I told you not to give me a fair draw with you, and to show you what I meant I pulled my gun and showed you some real speed. I've got that old gun yet. She is restin' comfortable on my hip now. I've got papers here for your arrest and extradition. I'm serving them now. If you make a bad move, I'll kill you, not as you killed Old Hayes, but just as quick. I'm going to take you back to the States, and there you will hang on the end of a rope. You know that. So do I. But I'll take you back alive. *Now you stand up straight and turn your back!*"

The man who is hunted for murder always intends to kill, but, face to face with an even chance, he chooses to wait for a more favorable opportunity. Generally it never comes, but he waits. So it was with Peabody. He got up slowly, looking straight into the eyes of the detective, watching for the slightest sign. But it did not come, and he turned his back.

The other went through his clothes speedily and took away his gun and knife. Then he sat down again. "Be seated, Peabody," he said quietly. "You can't have any more liquor. I don't want to make a fuss among these Greasers. You and I will sit here till morning. Then we will go back over the range."

So they sat throughout the night, keeping their silent vigil, the one watching for the closing of an eye, the slightest sign of sleep, the other always ready, always alert, always on guard. And when the morning dawned, they went out, Peabody always ahead, got their horses from the Mexican, and rode from the town. When they were out of sight, Bradley halted him, handcuffed his hands behind his back, and tied his feet to the stirrups. Then he took the horse in tow, while the sullen, fiery eyes cursed him, and the lips spoke horrible profanity. Thus they made the long pilgrimage over the range.

AT DUSK the Vagabond stood in the doorway of the Martin home. Before him sat the girl with head pillowed in her arms on the table. He thumbed his hat for some moments in awkward silence. If he had been dealing with a man he would have been at home, but to see the distress of a woman unnerved him and he hardly knew how to begin.

"Miss Martin," he said at length, "there is no use to feel bad. I have brought him back. He is not hurt, and if you want him, I—I reckon he'd rather stay than to go with me. He's tied up now, but I'll turn him loose if you say so."

The words brought her head up with a jerk. "Why on earth should I want him?" she cried. "Do you think I am running an asylum for thieves and murderers and the scum of the earth?"

"I don't know what you want of him," he answered contritely. "You told him I was after him, and warned him to get away. I can go back without my game once, rather than hurt your feelings."

"You heard that—you heard me tell him to get away?"

"I—I couldn't help it, Miss Martin, really I couldn't. I was hid in the brush to get him when he came by."

"How terrible that you should see and hear that, and think that I wanted to save him! Oh, you stupid, foolish man! You are just like dad—you don't give me a place at all, and it's no wonder, for I have no place here. Oh, oh, I was afraid! He said he wouldn't be taken alive, and I thought he would kill you!" Then her head fell forward again into her protecting arms.

Long the Vagabond pondered over this. His mind was badly tangled. He shifted uneasily from one foot to another and twirled his grimy hat. "Was it—er—was it just because you were afraid of bloodshed?" he asked finally.

"I thought you were a detective," came a feeble voice from the table.

Now the man had his cue. "I am!" he cried eagerly. "I am! I'm a peach of a one, too!" and he came forward and took the unresisting form in his arms. "I'm too thick-headed, little sweetheart, and I need a pardner like you. Will you come when I send for you? I'll buy you a ranch, or build a home for you in Little Old New York."

"Just anywhere," answered a muffled voice from the folds of his shabby coat.

"My little girl!" he said tenderly. "You couldn't have the old Vagabond shot full of holes, could you? I can't get killed now. I just can't! But I've got to get out of this country to-night!"

Then he put her gently back, and abruptly left the room to take up the long night trail across the border.

Digitized by Google

THE UNKNOWN MAN

by

Frederick Irving Anderson

HE SAT in his chair in the dark, fully dressed, all through the night, turning over and over in his mind the event which had at length come to pass. He was not superstitious. There was nothing supernatural about life, he had proved that with a simple twist of the wrist. There was nothing supernatural about death; else it should be haunting him now. But he was selfish. Revenge had belonged to him, and he would enjoy it. Retribution had belonged to him, and he had exacted it. The slate was clean What claim had the law on him?

Dawn filtered through the slanting vanes of the Venetian blinds, cold, chilly dawn, and found him heavy-headed.

First came the milkman with rattling wagon and clinking bottles. He watched him through the blinds. A policeman was standing at the gate, swinging his club. Drud watched him—at first, shocked; then, when his faculties reasoned, with complacence. Surely human ingenuity could not so readily have unraveled the knot of circumstance with which he had surrounded his work! Yet, a policeman stood there—at his gate.

Ten minutes passed. A vague dread took hold of the watcher. He shivered. Why should he shiver, he asked himself? Was he so weak, then, so ill prepared, that so trivial an incident, a mere suggestion, should upset his equilibrium?

He drew himself together with an effort. But the thought would not down. He asked himself why. This was why. Men of the law henceforth were his enemies. There was something cold and hard in this fact, that forced it home on his senses. He had not thought of it before, that is, not in the same way. This man at his gate was his enemy. Every minion of the law was his enemy. They would not know it, when they passed him in the street. But he himself would.

The policeman moved on, unconscious of the eyes that watched him through the shutters.

The newsboy came soon. He was no sooner out of sight than Drud opened the door boldly and picked up his bundle of morning papers. Eagerly he searched them. No, there was nothing there about him; except, scattered here and there, the words crime, murder, justice, fugitive, prison—all shockingly intense terms this morning. But there was nothing about *him.* Why should there have been? It was only a few hours since he had washed his hands of this affair. Still, newspapers are such wonderful organizations. They might have had at least a line in all these columns of jumble.

Digitized by Google

But wait! His fingers tingled. Here, in a remote corner, under an advertisement, was a paragraph, in fine type. It was about an Unknown Man.

Is there anything so various as the Unknown Man? He is here, there, everywhere, the same day, the same hour. And usually dead. This one was. A police sergeant had reported him as washed up on the tide at the Inlet, at one in the morning. Three lines in fine type! What a slender tomb!

Drud heard the housemaid moving about the kitchen. He hurriedly undressed himself and crept into bed. It was Sunday morning and he would not be disturbed until late.

He awoke at ten, surprised to find that he had been asleep. He breakfasted in his dressing-gown, a luxury he allowed himself on the first day of the week, and read his papers before taking his tub.

Again he searched the columns. But there was nothing; only the chance three lines. He smiled grimly. All of his ingenious plotting of months, all of the infinite exertion of his brain, to rob his victim first of identity, then of life, was summed up here in three lines of microscopic type!

There was just the suggestion of the smug about his smile, as he stepped out into the cold Winter drizzle at dusk and walked to his club, where he would dine.

DUKE BRYSON was late for dinner. There was nothing unusual in this, Duke being a pillar of the press, a slave of the public pulse. So Drud gave himself over to his vice, Gaboriau, and waited, not impatiently. He and Duke had taken Sunday dinner together ever since they had come on each other again, after several years lost beyond boyhood. Finally Duke came, two hours late, and they sat down in their own cosy corner.

"These are hard days for me," said Duke, by way of explaining his tardiness. "You know the big advertisers drop out after the holidays and leave an awful hole to be filled with news.

"Do you know," went on the editor, smiling whimsically as he set down his glass, "if I were ever to plot a crime, if I ever schemed justifiable murder—and naturally I would think it justifiable if I contemplated it—I would be very particular about the season of the year."

"That sounds interesting," said Drud. He smiled, in spite of himself, though somewhat startled by the line the conversation had taken,

"Yes," went on Duke, "I would be very particular about the calendar. Now, for instance, this is the first week in January. I should say—and I know what I am talking about—that the average criminal has less chance of getting away with the goods the first week after Christmas and the first week after New Year's than during any other time in the year. If I were plotting to put a troublesome body out of my path, I would pick out the first three weeks in December, among several propitious periods in the calendar. People have more money to spend just before the holidays."

"You might get up an Almanac of Crime," suggested Drud, "like they have for the farmer, giving the changes of the moon, and heart-to-heart talks to criminals on when to sow and when to reap."

"I could do it," laughed Bryson. "Do you happen to know, for instance, that there are four times as many bank-robberies, defalcations I mean, in the month of April as in any other month in the year? But I am talking about murder. It is a good deal a question of space, and news to fill the space, when you come to avenging grisly crimes. Just before Christmas everybody has money. They save it to spend it at that time. That's why the big department stores angle for the surplus cash of the beloved public. They advertise. They hog every page in sight. We have to compress the news.

"Take our paper for instance," went on Bryson. "During the month of December the city news department, of which I have the onerous honor of being the director, draws about eighteen columns out of the wreck, for all its regular local news.

"Now, I can't do much in the way of dishing up horrors during those three weeks when the Christmas spirit has got hold of everybody. I haven't room enough to turn around. And, take it from me, when the city editor hasn't room to turn around, the police take a nap. And the public are a good deal like the police. They decide that the newspaper doesn't think much of this murder, so they don't take any interest in it. If the newspapers are printing scare-heads and getting out a dozen extra editions in an afternoon, the detective bureau wakes up and takes off its coat. You can't blame them. You would probably do the same

Digitized by Google

thing if you were a policeman. And when the police take only half an interest in a suspicious case, the criminal has twice as good a chance of getting away, hasn't he?

"Yes," said Drud. "I never thought of it in that light before. It opens up an interesting question. Is there any more crime in January than in December?"

"No," said Bryson. "If you would examine the police blotters, you would find it runs about the same. But, on the other hand, if you read the newspapers, and didn't go beyond them, you couldn't help being struck by the slim crime *showing* just before Christmas. There *is* just as much crime, though. The only difference is that we don't spend so much time running it down, because if we did, we wouldn't have space to print it."

"Then, to come down to bed-rock," laughed Drud, "public morals, as the newspaper readers see it, depend on how much money the public is anxious to spend at any given time."

"It amounts to about that," said Bryson. "And the public are not half so indignant over crime if we smother it in a few inches of type as when we expand it by the yard."

Drud smiled and played with his glass.

"Yes," he said, "I believe that is true. "We don't froth at the mouth unless you tell us to, on the first page, in big type. But," he added, as he adjusted the red shade of the electric candle by his plate. "How about the dull old saw you are so fond of quoting on your editorial page—'Murder will out'?"

"Bosh!" snapped the city editor. This was his pet aversion, this old saw hung on the peg of an epigram.

"How big a percentage of murderers are ever brought to justice?" he cried, leaning over the table, and shaking his finger at his friend. "I don't know," he went on, without waiting for an answer. "But I can give a pretty good guess. Just about as big a percentage as there are smugglers brought to book. For every smuggler who is caught, a hundred slip through with the goods. It's about the same with murder. Have you ever noticed," he asked, "have you ever by any chance noticed the ubiquitous nature of our old friend, the Unknown Man?"

Drud stooped over to turn his bottle of wine in the ice, before he answered this question. "No," he said, casually. "I can't say that I have."

"HE IS a weird cuss," said Bryson. "He's all over town the same day. On the beach at Coney Island, on a bench in the park, bobbing in the wash of a ferryboat. The Morgue is full of him. I spike him by the dozen every day."

"Spike him?"

"Yes, kill him," said the newspaper man, laughing. "When we throw out a piece of news that is commonplace or cheap, we say we 'spike' it, we 'kill' it. We keep a spindle on our desks for the purpose of impaling the trash. Sometimes we call it the 'dead hook.' We don't dare throw the stuff away until the day is done, because there is never any telling what later developments might arise to give importance to the smallest trifle.

"So we impale these poor devils by the dozen," went on Bryson. "In a big town like New York I suppose they will average a dozen a day. Usually they come to us as a police-blotter record. Three lines or so. How many of them," cried the city editor, pleased in having at length drawn his companion's interest, "do you believe died accidental deaths or by their own hand? How many of them do you believe are murdered?"

Drud dropped his eyes. "Well," he said finally, "what's the answer?"

"I don't know," answered Bryson. "That's the point. They are too obscure. Personally I believe the greater share of them are murdered. But there is no way of finding out. You could put a dozen of our best reporters on the trail of the tragedies of the Unknown Man and, unless there was something extraordinary about him, you wouldn't develop a single horror. The police-blotter descriptions are all too general, too vague, too much alike. You read Gaboriau," went on Bryson. "I'll wager that if your great Lecoq were a reporter in my office, he would 'spike' nine of ten Unknown Men that came along over the police wire. That's what becomes of your old saw that murder will out. There isn't one murder in ten discovered. I'm talking of a big city, of course, where we have millions of obscure people.

"But," he added, "we are wandering from the subject. What I started out to explain, when I began, was why I was late."

"Yes, you began by telling me it was safer to kill a man when the Christmas spirit suffused the land than to put it off until after the holidays, when all good citizens are broke and grouchy."

Digitized by Google

"Exactly," put in Bryson. "This is the first week in January. The business office sent me my usual chart this afternoon. In the first place, it is Sunday. In the second place, it is the lull after the holidays. Ads for Monday morning dropped sixty per cent. So little Willie here has to work with a fine-tooth comb. He has to find news. He has to fill his paper, and there is an awful big hole. Got to have some crime, of course. Nothing fills a hole like a mystery. So," concluded Bryson, "I worked two hours past dinner-time trying to find a mystery for to-morrow morning."

"And did you find it?"

"Yes. We found it."

"A murder?"

"Yes, a murder, and a dandy," said the city editor, biting off the end of his cigar. "I can't help thinking about the scientific villain who did it," he added. "He was a wonder. But it all goes to show that these scientific villains all slip up somewhere along the line. If he had only known, now, about the Christmas spirit we have just been talking about!"

"Who—who was it?"

"Our old friend," laughed Bryson. "The Unknown Man."

An involuntary exclamation escaped Drud. The lamp-shade threw a ruddy glow, but he felt that his face was white.

"We didn't 'spike' him this time," went on Bryson. "We couldn't afford to. We didn't have news enough, so we hunted for a needle in a haystack. And," he cried in enthusiasm, "we found the needle!"

THE two friends sat in silence, puffing at their cigars, Bryson alive with the recollections of a good day's work well done. Drud called a waiter to shut the transom. "I am cold," he said. "This rain brings out my malaria."

"Did you happen to read the *Record* this morning?" said Bryson, lighting a fresh cigar. "I don't suppose you did. Nobody does, on this side of the Bridge. Well, that's where our Unknown Man was entombed. I don't know how it happened. But there were three lines hidden away under an advertisement. He was found on the beach at the Inlet at one o'clock this morning."

"Yes? Yes?" cried Drud. And then, even more eagerly: "Bryson, you are confuting your own theories."

"No, I am not," said Bryson decidedly. "I am proving them by the exception. This is the one Unknown Man in ten. We wouldn't have taken the trouble to find him if people had been busy reading Christmas advertisements."

"Who is he—the Unknown Man?"

"I don't know."

"How do you know he was murdered?"

"We happen to have a Lecoq in our office," explained Bryson.

"You are confuting your own theories again," cried Drud, leaning back in his chair. "You have just been telling me that the master detectives are frauds when it comes to unraveling your obscure, average murders."

"Ah, yes. Obscure—there you have it. Do you know that nine out of ten of our crimes are committed by professional criminals? The thug who smashes the skull of a pal in a dark alley with a bludgeon, or gives him dope, is the obscure. He usually goes free. Logic and deduction can't find him. Sherlock Holmes can't sit down in a dressing-gown with Doctor Watson and think *him* out of his hole!

"But," Bryson went on, jabbing the table-cloth with his finger. "Take the other kind of criminal—the cool, calculating amateur, the man of intellect, who seeks retribution, and who covers his crime with the chain of circumstance. He is the man we catch. The one dominating peculiarity of this kind of criminal is his egotism. Sherlock Holmes can catch him. Why? Because he doesn't kill on the impulse of the moment. He meditates. He premeditates. He schemes. Nine times out of ten, he overschemes. He loses his sense of proportion. His foot slips somewhere."

Drud drummed the table for a moment in silence. He was pleased to note that his nerves were behaving much better than they had this morning when he was annoyed by the policeman at his gate.

"I happened to see that paragraph you referred to," he said. "That man was drowned. There was nothing unusual about him."

"He was not drowned," retorted Bryson coldly. "That's just the point."

"How was he killed?" asked Drud.

"He was killed by a needle!"

"——!" Everything went black before his eyes. He gripped at the arms of his chair to hold himself from falling forward on the table. Dimly at first, then clearer, he heard the voice of Bryson, talking.

Digitized by Google

"We have a man on our staff named White," his friend was saying. "He is a wonder. Quiet, soft-spoken, never in any one's way. He was born a specialist. Besides that, he has intuition, which amounts almost to clairvoyance at times. When he starts out to unravel a murder mystery, or a great robbery, the detectives whose names you see so much in the papers follow him. He never follows them. There was a horrible dismemberment case here in town about ten years ago. You may remember it. He found a piece of oil-cloth. When the murderer—a woman, by the way—arrived home one night, she found White sitting on her door-step waiting for her with that piece of oil-cloth. He had traced her by it."

Drud turned out the light by his place, and put his hands over his eyes.

"HOWEVER," continued Bryson, "I am drifting from the subject again. When White came in this morning, he asked me if I didn't think there might be something worth while in that chance paragraph in the *Record*. I told him to go ahead." Bryson chuckled. "You certainly never can tell," he said. "You are a surgeon, Drud, and this will interest you especially. Tell me, have you ever used cocaine, or any of its derivatives, in spinal anesthesia?"

It was so long before Drud gave any hint at having heard the question that Bryson repeated it.

"Yes, oh yes," he said finally, leaning his head on his hand as he spoke. "You may remember, I operated with Havenko himself when he was here last year, and then—" he paused, as the words came hard—"we have used it several times at the hospital, in exceptional cases."

"I am going to ask you a question," said Bryson. "It may sound queer to you, but you will understand, of course. Tell me," he said, leaning forward, "has it ever been your misfortune to kill a man with it?"

Drud sprang to his feet, his face livid. Bryson looked at him for a moment in astonishment, and then smiled and rose and gently put him back in his chair.

"It was rather a rash thing to ask a reputable surgeon," he said, self-accusingly. "Your profession makes such a god of its blamed ethics. Still, I have known surgeons who have admitted it."

Drud had no word in answer. He sat staring at his friend, feeble and abject.

"As I understand," went on Bryson, "if the fluid is injected in the lower region of the spinal-cord, it deadens temporarily the nerves controlling locomotion and the sense of touch, below that point. If you inject it too high in the spinal-cord, say in the back of the neck, you affect the nerves that control respiration and the heart-action. That's right, isn't it?"

Drud nodded, mechanically.

"And what happens if you so deaden the spinal-cord in the medullary region just below the brain, with cocaine, or stovaine, or tropacocaine, that the motor impulses are not carried back and forth?"

Bryson leaned forward upon the table eagerly, intent upon the development of his theories. Drud raised his eyes and looked at him a full minute before he answered. Then he said, in a dry voice: "The patient dies."

"Beautifully simple!" cried the enraptured man with the nose for news. "Hardly more than a pin-prick, the injection of the fluid, and the machine runs down and stops. By gad, Drud," he went on, pushing his chair against the wall and swinging one leg over the other, "do you know that I gave White the merry laugh when he telephoned in that he had solved the mystery of the death of his Unknown Man, this floater, who would have been in Potter's Field by next Thursday if our advertisers had done right by us? I gave him the laugh when he told me he had unearthed the first murder on record by means of spinal anesthesia!

"Mind you," bubbled on the city editor, his voice vibrant with the thrill of discovery, "all he found on this man, who should have turned out like any ordinary poor devil of a corpse, was a pin-prick between the second and third vertebræ. The police didn't notice it. White telephoned to Dr. Carlos, and in less than an hour they had determined the cause of death beyond a suspicion of doubt. It's the greatest story since the Rice will case, and we have got the whole town beaten on it!"

With trembling fingers, slowly and almost in pain, Drud reached across the table and turned out the electric candle at Bryson's place. The light was red, and it seemed to crack his brain. His lower lip drooped until his mouth was half open. His eyes stared

Digitized by Google

at the glistening cut-glass, seeing nothing. Before him, in his mind's eye, he beheld his ingenious fabric of circumstance rent to tatters. His skill, his cunning, his fiendish ingenuity, then, had come to nothing! A quiet, soft-spoken theorist had shattered without an effort the inner line of his defenses as if it had been of cards! Chance, idle, wandering chance, a day of the week, a number on a calendar, had crushed him to earth; chance directed unwittingly, eagerly, by the hand of the one friend for whom he would have given his life!

He had but to look at Bryson, a thousand miles away in his exhilaration, blanketing himself with tobacco-smoke, to know that Bryson, least of all persons in the world, suspected that at this moment he was sitting opposite the quaking fugitive who in a few hours would be sought by all the world.

With an effort he managed to pull himself together. Just when he mastered his emotion and was a man again, a thought swept over him, possessed him, transformed him into a maniac. He began to laugh, shrilly. He half rose, propping himself up by one hand, and with the other thrusting an outstretched finger at his friend.

"Who—who is the murdered man?" he demanded.

Bryson slowly turned on Drud. He fanned away the tobacco-smoke. He looked sharply at his friend.

"For heaven's sake, Drud!" he said slowly. "What is the matter with you?"

"That's the way with you people!" cried Drud hysterically. "Do you wonder that you breed crime, foster crime, spread crime? Anything to fill your —— rags when you can't sell your columns for money! You jump at a fly! You find a pin-prick in the water-logged cadaver of some poor unfortunate devil who wanted to end his life in peace, and you seize the world by the ears and shriek bloody murder! You lie, you lie, you lie, you live on lies!"

Bryson reached across the table and caught Drud by both hands.

"Wait a minute," he said quietly. "Be still. Be quiet, for heaven's sake! Your nerves are all torn to tatters."

He spoke hurriedly to the waiter, who brought a pony of brandy, and he persuaded Drud to drink. The seizure passed off quickly, and left Drud with chattering teeth. Bryson helped him to a private parlor opening off the dining-room, and there the two friends sat for a long time, Bryson holding the clammy hand.

"YOU don't even know who killed him," mumbled Drud childishly.

Bryson was a bad nurse. His enthusiasm got the better of him. "No," he laughed, "but we will. I wouldn't be at all surprised if White were sitting on his doorstep now, waiting for him to come home." Then, recollecting himself: "I'll get a carriage and take you home, old chap," he said, rising and touching the bell. "You've been working yourself to death."

"No—no!" cried Drud. "I won't go home to-night! I'll stay here! You can tell Charlie to light the light in my room upstairs if you will, Duke, like a good fellow."

The attendant who answered the bell brought Bryson a card.

"Yes, yes," cried Bryson eagerly. "Send him right in."

A young man, with blue eyes set very wide apart and a nose like Louis Fourteenth's, entered quietly. It was White. He returned his chief's effusive greeting without a smile.

"This is Doctor Drud," said Bryson, pointing to his companion. "Doctor, here is the young man we have just been talking about. The Doctor has been ill, White."

"I am very sorry for the Doctor," said White, looking sharply at the now grotesque figure. "I want just a word with him," he said to Bryson.

"Doctor," he began impersonally, as he took a seat beside Drud, "I have just come from Mr. Carson of the Surgical Appliance Company, and he tells me that his concern manufactures a special iridium needle for your hypodermic sets. I have a fragment of one of them here."

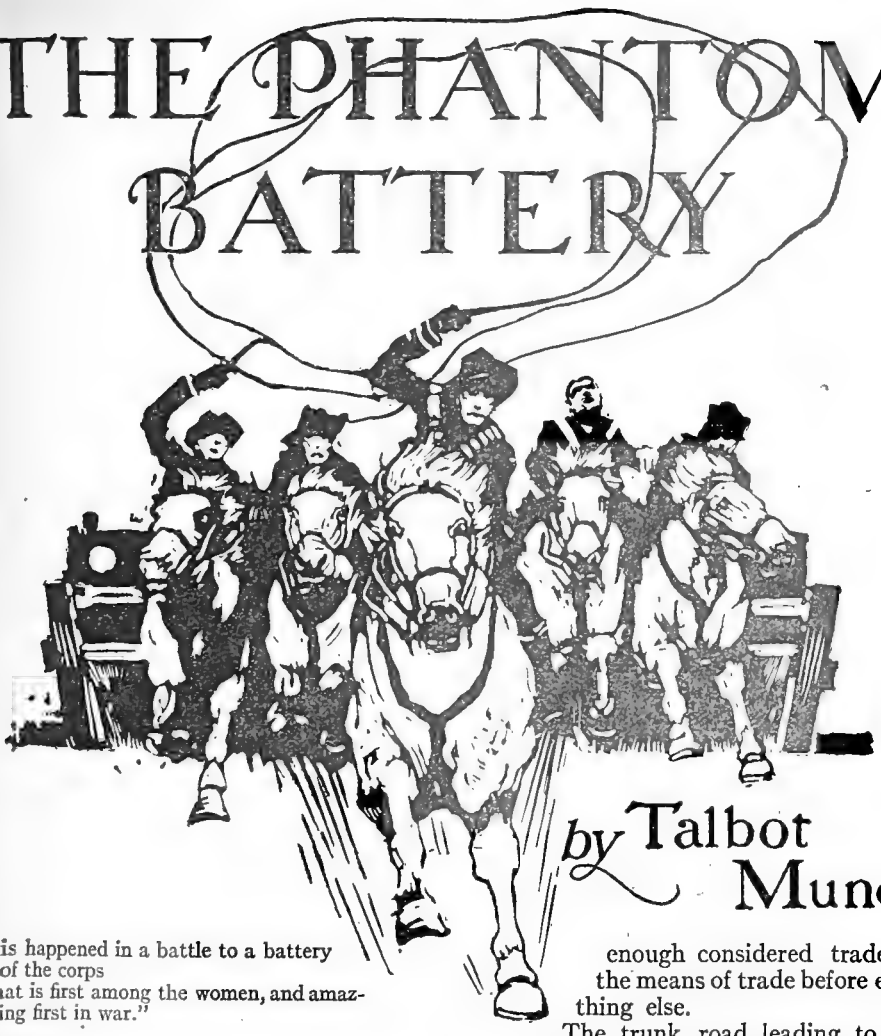
He opened his hand and disclosed, lying in the palm, a tiny section of a tube of silvery metal, no bigger than a hair. Drud and Bryson stared at it in breathless silence. White rose, with an effort, as one tired with a day's work. Bryson was looking at him, his burning eyes faltering over a question he dared not utter.

"I am very sorry, indeed, sir," the young man said to his chief, "because I have long known the attachment you hold for him."

He turned to the door and nodded, and there entered two men, two men of the law, whom Drud only that morning had come to know as his enemies.

Digitized by Google

THE PHANTOM BATTERY



by Talbot Mundy

"This happened in a battle to a battery
of the corps
That is first among the women, and amazing first in war."

THERE are two roads that lead from Multan in Northwestern India to Dera Ghazi Khan; one of them is a narrow winding road, deep-rutted from the wheels of bullock-carts, crossing the Jhelum River at a point some thirty miles above the proper ford, and two good days' march longer than the Government road. The longer road is the one the natives use. It runs roughly in a semi-circle, wandering in and out among the hillocks and clumps of trees and scrub.

The Government road runs straight, almost as Roman roads were built. It is a good, broad, trunk road, built by "John Company" for the use of troops and guns in the days before the railway. The Honorable East India Company naturally enough considered trade and the means of trade before everything else.

The trunk road leading to Dera Ghazi Khan is in perfect preservation; it runs straight from point to point; it crosses the unbridled Jhelum at a shallow and comfortable ford which is clearly staked off between the dangerous quick-sands that lie on either side of it; and yet not a native driver, or wandering fakir, priest, farmer or merchant will use it. The journey from Multan to Dera Ghazi Khan is more than a long day's march; one must halt at the ford at sunset; and it is at the hour of sunset that the natives of that part of India would rather not go near the ford.

They make no mystery about it, provided one is not too inquisitive. When asked, they give their reason readily, in all seriousness and evidently expecting to be believed. They are afraid of the Phantom Battery and

Digitized by Google

its phantom sergeant-major. They will tell you it is not good to see the Phantom Battery—and that is all. If you press them, they will tell you that it is not good to talk about it; and although they tell the tale to one another, and especially to their children when the shadows fall at night, it is not easy for a white man to learn the story.

There is no official record of the happening, for there was nobody to take it down; only the natives know the truth of it, and they refused to talk; none of them witnessed it; "their fathers said this and that, but what do they know? True, their fathers were honorable men, but memories are short, and—Nay, but the sahib is joking! There is no Phantom Battery. The longer road toward the north is better for the bullocks, who love to eat the wind-swept grass; and men can make fires there in the open where no robbers can come on them unawares. True, there are police patrols who protect the Government road, but again the sahib must be joking, for are not the police themselves the worst robbers? Of a truth there is no Phantom Battery." It is not easy to extract a story from the natives of Hindustan.

But piece by piece, detail by detail, a man may arrive at the truth in course of time, if he has only the patience, and can wade through the sea of lies that veil the real India as gossamer veils the beauty of the nautch girls. Somewhere, not very deep below the surface, lies the truth, and it is always worth the seeking.

History is built up of incidents, and often enough it is the most trivial incidents that lead up to the most astounding history. The Indian mutiny is a case in point. The fuel was piled up for it by a long chain of trivialities such as issuing greased cartridges to the native troops, and any spark would have sufficed to set it alight when the hour arrived. No one was to blame for it but "John Company"; and it was made possible, and all but successful, by the careless handling of the Company's troops. As at the present day, there were both native and British troops in India at that time, though the native troops were much more numerous; the latter were well drilled, well armed, officered by Englishmen, and quite sufficient for all general purposes; but a certain number of British soldiers were recruited in England by the Company and shipped to India at vast expense to lend a stiffening to the natives, and in case of need to over-awe them.

Signs of the impending mutiny were plentiful enough, although the Company's officers chose to ignore them, and it was in keeping with the general scheme of carelessness and mismanagement that at the time when the mutiny broke out in the Spring of 1857 a battery of the famous Bengal Horse Artillery should be stationed at Dera Ghazi Khan, practically two days' march from the nearest support. In time of war unsupported artillery is the most hopelessly helpless thing imaginable; the officers of the East India Company knew that as well as anybody else, and no doubt, had they believed that trouble of any kind was really brewing, the battery would have remained in cantonments at Multan in spite of the men's behavior. But nobody believed there would be trouble.

THE men of B Battery had been misbehaving and the cantonments at Multan had become too hot to hold them. The battery "clink" had been invariably full to overflowing, and those of the men who happened to be temporarily out of cells had made it a steady rule to run amuck in the native bazaar. So Major Curtis had been ordered to take his battery under canvas to Dera Ghazi Khan, where the men would have less chance of getting into trouble, and where he could drill them into better behavior. The battery was in disgrace, undergoing well deserved punishment and being out of sight was for the time being out of mind.

Major Curtis and his brother officers were not unlike the artillery officers of the present day. Their uniform was different in certain details, they swore more frequently and drank infinitely harder, but in all essential details they resembled the modern type. They were gallant and honorable gentlemen, fearless leaders of men, keen on their profession, and free from any taint of physical cowardice.

The men, though, were different. Let no one imagine that they were not good soldiers; they were first-class fighting men. The artillerymen especially were picked from the very best men enlisted in the Company's service. But they were as unlike the modern Tommy Atkins as one man can be unlike another. They were almost all of them illiterate, and many of them had served

Digitized by Google

a term in jail prior to enlistment. All of them were, without exception, rum-swilling, foul-mouthed scoundrels, who had to be kept in order by the fiercest kind of discipline. They were underpaid, sometimes ill-treated, and not always too well fed; and the surroundings of the lines in which they were obliged to live were such as to obliterate any decent instincts any of them may once have had.

Men were recruited in those days anywhere where men were to be had, without regard to character or antecedents, and it was not at all unusual for a magistrate to give a convicted felon the alternative choice of a term in jail or enlistment in the army. Most of them were in the army because no other possible career was open to them. The few among them who had been decent fellows before they enlisted had soon grown accustomed to being regarded as scoundrels merely because they were soldiers, and before long began to vie with the rest in living up to the reputation that was given them.

In those days it was next to impossible for an enlisted man to have any self-respect, for any one of them was liable to be sentenced by court-martial to be tied to a gun-wheel and flogged; and as the authorities seemed to imagine that the worst blackguards made the best fighting material, it is scarcely to be wondered at that the morals of the soldiers in India were unspeakably bad, if indeed they can be said to have had any morals at all.

They could fight, and they did fight—in war for the honor of the regiment or battery, and in peace time with one another; and they were drunk whenever they could get the rum. They had no personal honor whatever, for no man could have any personal honor who had been flogged at a gun-wheel before a crowd of grinning natives or had seen his comrades so flogged; and it is therefore all the more to be wondered at that they held the honor of the battery so dear. It may have been atavism—some memory of the instinct that makes a wolf loyal to the pack, or it may have been some instinct more civilized than that; but the fact remains that had not the hard-bitten, shameless scoundrels who formed the rank and file of B Battery held the honor of their battery more dear than life itself, this story could never have been written. Eight guns would have fallen to the mutineers, and that would be all there would be to say about it—eight guns and their complement of ammunition on the wrong side of the scale at a critical moment.

THE Mutiny broke out on an ever-memorable Sunday in the month of May, 1857, and flamed through all the disaffected part of India with a suddenness that was unbelievable. Nobody has ever solved the mysterious riddle of how news travels in India among the natives; it travels, for the natives know the news; and although in these days modern systems of signalling give the Government an advantage over the native population, in '57 the position was reversed, and the native system of intelligence was very much faster than anything that the British had.

On the day following the outbreak of the Mutiny every native servant, groom, and camp-follower deserted from B Battery. They gave no sign, made no disturbance, and said nothing—they simply disappeared. The incident of course put Major Curtis and his brother officers on their guard, for a wholesale desertion of native supernumeraries must mean trouble of some kind; but they had not the very least suspicion that such a thing as a general mutiny and rebellion could be even possible. Like the rest of the British population of India, they believed that the native troops were absolutely loyal and that the rest of the inhabitants of the country had long ago been cowed into absolute submission.

The guards around the camp were doubled; non-commissioned officers and men were ordered to keep an extra sharp look-out; and certain of the rank and file were told off to do the work of the deserters. That was all. Nobody was particularly worried. A mounted gunner was sent in with despatches to Multan, to inform the commanding officer of the facts. The messenger never got there, but those in camp could not possibly know that. Drill went on as usual. Horses were groomed and fed; meals were eaten; men talked and smoked and drank much as usual—only the guards were told to keep very wide awake and to capture and bring in any suspicious-looking native who might show himself anywhere near the camp.

So it happened that, shortly before sunrise on the Wednesday morning following the outbreak, a native cavalryman, who had remained loyal to the British at what horrible risk to himself only such as he might

Digitized by Google

guess, was taken prisoner as he galloped into the camp with tidings. He was thrown from his horse, disarmed, and sat on before he had time to explain his business, and then frog-marched, face downwards, to the major's tent, where he was kept waiting several minutes.

The man's message was hidden in the cuff of his tunic, where he could easily get at it to swallow it in case of capture. It was written on the thinnest paper procurable, and folded small. The messenger knew well enough that had he been captured he would have been searched thoroughly, and then cut open and searched inside as well, for there were many men among the mutineers who could read English well enough to decipher the meaning of a despatch; but he had counted on being able to chew the letter into pulp before swallowing it. An Indian who is loyal is loyal in everything, down to the smallest details, and it was such as he who saved India for England during one of the darkest periods in her whole history.

As the Major came grumbling from his tent, shivering with the early morning cold, and cursing the fever that racks everybody in turn in that part of the world, the Sikh straightened his turban hastily, saluted, plucked the letter from its hiding-place, and handed it to him without a word. The message gave every known detail of the calamity, and as he read it the Major's face fell.

It ordered him to abandon his camp and report at Multan without losing a minute. It was impossible, the message continued, to send him an escort of cavalry, and he must make the best of it and rely on the speed of his horses and the fear that the natives of the country were known to entertain for artillery. An attempt would be made to meet him on the Multan side of the river, and in any case he could count on every effort being made by the garrison to draw off the attention of the enemy from his battery as he approached Multan.

Above all he was to bear in mind the importance of not letting his guns or ammunition fall into the hands of the mutineers; it would be better to destroy them than that that should happen.

THE Sikh's face was as impassive as a rock as he watched the Major. It was not until the latter had finished reading the letter for the second time that the messenger spoke; when he did speak it was in English.

"And as I crossed the ford last evening, sahib, there was one there, a gunner of the sahib's battery, who was not yet dead. Him I slew."

"Why? What do you mean?"

"With many oaths such as white soldiers use he begged me to kill him, sahib. Thus, with my sword I slew him, severing the neck from his shoulders. Never before was gunner so glad to die."

"What was the matter with him?"

"The mutineers had made him prisoner, sahib, and nailed him after many tortures to the great tree that overlooks the ford on this side. It seems he had not yet crossed the river. He bade me report to you, sahib, that he had thrown your honor's despatches into the river where the mutineers could not get them."

The Major nodded. It is a good plan when dealing with the native races of India not to appear affected by news of any kind. A stiff chin is half the art of ruling. The Major turned to his orderly.

"Summon all the officers to my tent at once, and send the Sergeant-major here."

The Sergeant-major came running at the word, a big gray-haired veteran of thirty years' service and ten campaigns—the best hated and worst feared and wisest soldier in the battery. From time immemorial down to the present day its sergeant-majors have been the back-bone of the British army. Until the actual fighting begins and the officers take charge, the morale and general efficiency of the men depend almost solely on the sergeant-majors, and it is due to their efforts that the officers have a well-knit force to take charge of when the need arises.

This man Flannigan was a splendid specimen of the breed; a bully, for a bully was needed in those days; fearless, for a whole battery of fearless ruffians were afraid of him; untiring, resourceful, completely competent, and wise to the point of cunning in all the rules of war. It was he who had made the battery the most efficient fighting unit in the whole of India, but he had not grown popular in the process.

"Sergeant-major! Have the battery ready to start in ten minutes. Parade in full marching order with all spare ammunition, and abandon everything else. The men must go without breakfast, but tell the quartermaster-sergeant to serve out to each

Digitized by Google

man whatever food he can to eat on the way. The horses are fed and watered already, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Be ready in ten minutes."

The Sergeant-major saluted and vanished. He knew his business. Part of it was not to ask questions, and another part of it was to say nothing that was not necessary. The battery had paraded before Major Curtis had finished explaining matters to his brother-officers. As the sun rose above the sky-line, shooting its pale gold beams of light into the purple of the early dawn, the advance guard rode out of camp at the trot, followed shortly after by the battery.

As the rear guard, less than three hundred yards behind, wheeled into line and followed them along the trunk road the camp went up in flames behind them. That was the first intimation that the men received of anything amiss. Since going under canvas they had grown quite accustomed to parading at dawn as part of their daily exercise; they had looked on this parade as part of a well-considered scheme to drill them until they were too tired for mischief. So they had been bad-tempered and sulky on parade —in that sullen mood that all commanders dread. But the sight of the burning camp changed their temper in a flash. Here was evidently what every soldier prayed for— "war, red war, north, south, east, and west," or at least the beginning of it; war, with its loot and the chances of loot, which are almost as good as loot itself! They became as cheerful and well-behaved as children going to a party, and a wave of animation ran through the ranks as a wave runs down the blade of a well-tempered sword when a strong man shakes it.

Major Curtis, eyeing his command, knew then that, heavy though the chances were against him, he was as well equipped to meet them as any commander could be who had an unescorted battery to take over sixty miles of hostile ground. Good horses, and well-drilled men spoiling for trouble— many a big stake has been won on that combination! He made up his mind to cross the ford that night. With his men in their present temper, his wisest plan was to take out of them every ounce he could, for men communicate their animation to the horses they ride, and more than anything he was depending on his horses.

The following morning his men and horses would be hungry, and an empty stomach is a wondrous bad thing to fight on. If he was to be attacked he would rather it should happen on the Multan side of the ford, where he might hope for possible support from the town; he hardly expected to be attacked while actually on the march. Probably an effort would be made to surprise him when he halted to rest the horses; the most dangerous place was undoubtedly the ford, rather more than half way to Multan, and he resolved to place that ford behind him as soon as possible.

He grew more and more confident as the road lengthened out behind him. Like all Englishmen of those days, he found it almost impossible to believe that the natives of India would dare to attack picked white troops in the open, and when he halted the battery as the sun grew hot at eleven o'clock he was careful to choose open ground. The men were posted in a circle round about and the horses were given a chance to nibble what dry grass there was. There was no sign of any enemy, or of anything untoward. The men grew contemptuous, and wondered why "the old garron," as they called their Major, had not turned on the natives who had set fire to the camp and "ripped 'em up with grape."

BUT the lookout was as keen as ever when the march was resumed, and no one was taken by surprise when a ragged volley was heard in front, and a solitary gunner came galloping back to report that the enemy were ambuscaded in force in the reeds and long grass over by the river-bank, and between them and the ford.

"Battery, action front!" The command rang out loud and clear before the words were out of the gunner's mouth. "At point-blank range! With grape! By sections! Fire!"

Round after round of grape-shot tore through the cover, ripping the life out of anything that lay there, and effectually clearing the road toward the ford. But a howl and the rattle of fire-arms on every side of them told them that they were in the midst of an ambuscade. Half of the guns were turned about on the instant. The horses, untouched so far, were sheltered in a place where the road ran between two tree-topped hillocks. The battery, fighting in something resembling a hollow square, answered each ragged and ill-aimed volley

Digitized by Google

with shrieking grape-shot that tore up the country-side and searched every scrap of natural cover.

It was a picnic for the men—"the real thing" at last after more than a weary year in cantonments. They blessed their luck, and worked their guns, and grinned as each charge of grape went on its scouring errand.

But the officers looked grim, and the Sergeant-major had one eye on his officers. Ammunition was short, and he and they knew it. The men might have known it too, had they stopped to think. But they had not been trained to think. It was their business to work their guns, and they did it, grinning—quickly, and with precision. They were happy, however their officers might feel; and as for the Sergeant-major, anything that made him look uncomfortable was a good thing; they hated him, and the less he liked a thing they better they felt about it. Meanwhile it was their business to work their guns, and they had nothing left to learn in that particular. Grape was the right dose for natives, and they served it out with a will.

But there was more even than the scarcity of ammunition to worry the officers and the gray old Sergeant-major. The ragged, ill-directed volleys had almost ceased, for the gun-fire had withered up every living thing within range; but a running independent fire, aimed by sharp-shooters from under cover that was artificial and most cunningly contrived, was making the position almost untenable. It was aimed solely at the officers, and two of them were down already, one of them dead, and one coughing out his life quietly among the horses where the men could not see him. He had dragged himself there the moment he was hit, for the sight of a wounded officer is likely to demoralize the steadiest men on occasion. The enemy evidently counted on having the battery at their mercy, once the officers were killed off, and the fire from a dozen rifles was aimed at each one of them persistently.

Then the ragged volleys commenced again. A fresh horde of fanatics was being urged on to destruction—Mohammedans, utterly regardless of death if only the guns might be taken by the survivors.

The steady, insistent sniping continued, and one by one the officers went down—so quietly that only the Sergeant-major noticed it. The enemy began to adopt rushing tactics now. They knew from the deserting orderlies how many rounds of ammunition were with the battery, and somebody had probably tried to count the rounds—and had miscounted them. The rush was timed too soon, and the charging fanatics were mowed down as they came.

The Sergeant-major found himself commanding a whole section, and his voice rose and fell steadily as he gave his orders. The men, accustomed to hearing him on parade, obeyed him naturally, without pausing to wonder why he should be directing their fire now; and the last round was slammed into the muzzle of a gun and rammed home before any of the men realized the state of affairs.

"Sergeant-major!"

He turned. It was Major Curtis, bleeding at the temple and from the mouth. He could scarcely speak, and a bullet-wound in the groin had made it almost impossible for him to stand.

"Quick! The river! Take the guns into the river! The enemy must—not—get—them! Not the ford—the quicksand—they'll sink. Leave me, I'm dying."

The Sergeant-major saluted.

"Battery! Limber up!" he roared. Few of the men had been hit. There were plenty of them left to work the guns. It was done like lightning.

"Ride one of the guns, sir."

"No! Leave me. See here!"

The Major drew a pistol and placed the muzzle of it in his mouth. The Sergeant-major swung himself on to his horse.

"Battery! Left and right wheel! Charge! Now, *ride*, you devils! Into the river! Right in! Right incline, there! More to the right! That's it—now *ride!*"

A hail of bullets followed the retreating guns, but no one, man or horse, seemed to be hit. And there was a howl of rage and disappointment from the rebels as they realized what was happening. They rushed in to interfere—too late. The men had seen the empty limbers, and knew what it meant. They were untamed, unshriven scoundrels with the chance in front of them to die like gentlemen, and they took it with curses on their lips, unflinching. Their own lives, their hopes of loot in this world, and fire in the world to come were nothing. They were riding to save the guns and the honor of B Battery; and the guns jolted and swayed

Digitized by Google

and rocked behind them to the tune of cracking whips and the rattle of empty limbers.

"Come hup! You brute!" The whip lash fell like a flail as the leading horses of Number One reared up on end, their forelegs pawing the empty air above the river. The following horses, urged on by their driver, crashed into them. The rotten bank crumbled and collapsed. Horses and men and gun, in a swearing, screaming, thundering confusion, plunged into the river, where the boiling quicksand swallowed them. Gun after gun, horses and men and guns, crashed in after them.

And last came the Sergeant-major. He sat his horse calmly on the bank, watching the last limber go swaying up to the brink, turned once to where his dead Major lay face upward on the grass, drove in his spurs, and plunged, with a laugh and "Here goes the last of B Battery!"

Then the sun went down—as it always does go down in India, sliding under the horizon hurriedly, as though nothing ever happened on the earth worth shining on.

WHAT the natives tell their children is, that at sundown the ghosts of the men of B Battery, riding ghostly horses and dragging behind them the ghosts of guns, go charging nightly into the Jhelum River at a place a little above the ford. And for that reason that road is unfrequented, and the long winding trail that loops out many miles toward the north is worn into ruts that are hub-deep by the native bullock carts.

FRAZZLED FRISKIES

by John A Heffernan

THERE was nothing soft and catlike about Mr. Thomas Armitage, head of the firm of Armitage & Barnes, manufacturers and distributers of "Frazzled Friskies, the King of Breakfast Foods." Not much! When he walked the floor of his office he thumped the boards with substantial feet encased in thick-soled shoes. When he sat down in the swivel chair in front of his ancient roll-top desk the chair creaked. When he spoke to the office boy the boy jumped. There was determination in the set of his pink chin, defiance in the thrust of his shoulders.

His side-whiskers impressed you. One memorable July morning when certain gray

Digitized by Google

engines of destruction swimming in the deep blue-green off Santiago's frowning gate broke out upon the Caribbean gale their grim battle-flags, a youthful landsman looked up at the banners from the deck of the *Texas* and exclaimed: "Gee! they make me think of the old man's whiskers!" He had been a shipping clerk for Armitage & Barnes.

For thirty years Mr. Armitage had bossed the selling and financial end of the concern from the offices in New York while his happy-go-lucky partner, Peter Barnes, had managed the mills in A-B Junction, Ohio. That prosperous community was made up of mill-hands on the Armitage & Barnes pay-roll, and had taken its name from the celebrated "A-B Beanies" with which the house made its début in the cereal trade.

Between the partners was a brotherly affection cemented long ago in the Western wilderness. It's a band of iron that ties you to a fellow with whom you've lived long in the open. Mr. Armitage and Mr. Barnes, known then as "Peaceful Tommy" (because he would rather fight than eat) and "Doleful Pete" (because of a grin so tropically hot that you could warm your hands at it), had rolled against each other in the mining country and thereafter had rolled in company in their search for yellow dirt.

They shared blankets in God's big bedroom where the ceiling is neither blue nor black, but a blend of somber suggestions spangled with clear cold diamonds. They built rough shacks and lived in them together on bleak hillsides; like-and-like they suffered chill and heat, filled themselves with food or were filled with a yearning therefor. They partook of joy and gloom; sharing tobacco in the solitudes, and rude revels in the tattered towns hanging shred-like on civilization's ragged edge. Together they made their strike and hurried with the proceeds back to the world of many people to start in business in a mill purchased from bankrupt owners who were glad to sell and skip before the sheriff got them.

All of which was running through the mind of Mr. Armitage as he stood at his office window and looked over West Street and the roofed docks out upon the troubled North River. It was a bright Spring afternoon, and Mr. Armitage was musing—something, by the way, in which he did not often indulge his busy mind. There awakened a memory of the day his boy was born—how he and Pete had talked the thing over back in the little cottage in Ohio and had concluded that it would be a right and a proper thing for the son of Mr. Armitage to marry the daughter of Mr. Barnes, and thus carry into another generation the partnership that had proven so profitable and so pleasurable.

It was true Pete didn't have any daughter at the time, nor even a wife, but he announced his unshakable determination to acquire both in the proper order. It was altogether too admirable and desirable a program to allow minor details to mar it. In their enthusiasm they hurried into the little bedroom to tell Mrs. Armitage, only to be shooed out again by an indignant nurse while Mrs. Armitage smiled pallidly and looked down at the little form in the bed beside her. Back in the sitting-room Mr. Armitage put his arms around the neck of Mr. Barnes and sobbed in his ear:

"Pete, you'll have to 'scuse her! She doesn't un'erstan', Pete, she doesn't un'erstan'!"

"'Sh all righ', Tom!" Mr. Barnes huskily reassured him. "'Sh all righ'!"

Whereupon he embraced his partner with such an excess of enthusiasm that both of them tumbled over on the little center-table. The sacrificial bowl it held rolled over on its side and the libation soaked the carpet, aromatic steam arising therefrom and tantalizing the nostrils of the two celebrants.

There wasn't any more in the house, Mr. Armitage ruefully explained, so that the celebration of the birth of Harold Armitage had to end right there.

Mr. Barnes never endeavored to get out of the contract by pleading the circumstances of its making. He wooed without delay and won without difficulty a maiden of the countryside, and three years thereafter in the Barnes sitting-room there was another celebration and a renewal of the pledge. Pete called his girl Edith.

AS MR. ARMITAGE thought of it, he smiled. "The young scamp was rebellious," he said to himself, thinking of the big son who had spent his young manhood studying art in Paris, "but he had to knuckle under, you bet your life!"

"Sir?" questioned a tranquil contralto from behind the severe little stenographer's desk beside the office door.

Digitized by Google

"Umph!" grunted Mr. Armitage, turning sharply.

"I did not catch what you said, sir," explained the stenographer, one hand upon her note-book and her pencil poised in the other.

"Nothing! Nothing!" Mr. Armitage said hastily. He walked over to his desk and sat down.

The young lady at the desk near the door laid down her book and pencil. Tranquil as was her voice, it was no more so than her countenance. Hers was a perfectly oval face, the hair brown and wavy and brushed back simply from an unruffled brow. Her eyes were of celestial hue and holy serenity. The nose and mouth were Raphaelesque, the cheeks pink with the tint of apple-blossoms. The white shirtwaist, stiffly starched, the prim collar, the plain black skirt, all bespoke a young person of great precision of thought and conduct.

"Miss Smith," said Mr. Armitage, looking up from his papers, "will you kindly give me the last weekly sales reports?"

Miss Smith opened a drawer of her desk and, taking therefrom a half-dozen sheets of paper, noiselessly crossed the room and placed them before her employer. Mr. Armitage ran his eye up and down the long columns of figures.

"Hum!" he exclaimed at last, his brow puckered. "They are still dropping."

"Yes, sir," Miss Smith assented.

The boss walked to the door and looked out upon the big general office. He noted the polished mahogany desks with their swivel chairs which his son had recently had substituted for the high desks and tall stools that had served the clerical force for so many years. He glowered at the neatly curtained windows and obviously new and highly polished brass railings and gates, the mirrors on the walls and the rugs on the floor. With an exclamation of disgust he tramped back to his desk.

"Confound the artistic temperament! I wish I'd never sent him to Paris!" he grumbled. "How can a business house do anything with an infernal furniture shop like that? The old desks were good enough when we were boosting the sales, but Harold has turned the warehouse into a blasted bonbon box; that's what he's done!"

He looked at Miss Smith as if he dared her to deny it. She did not dare.

"It stops at that threshold—I'll have none of it in here!" he declared, giving her another chance. She was goldenly silent. Her employer looked at her with approval.

"It's only just, Miss Smith," said he, "to tell you that you have kept your head in all this folly. You are about the only thing left in the place that Harold hasn't tried the artistic temperament business on, and"—the old gentleman grinned—"if it wasn't for Edie he'd have you togged out like a cake of chocolate, also!"

Again Miss Smith held her tongue discreetly. She was a young woman who wasted no language.

"You can tell the cashier to put five dollars a week more on your salary," said Mr. Armitage.

"Thank you, sir," said the young lady sweetly. This was something worth talking about.

"Not at all," Mr. Armitage responded pleasantly. "When I tell you to do a thing, you do it; when I dictate a letter to you, you write it as I dictate it and don't go sticking in some blame-fool notions of your own. Now, if you please, we'll get at the mail."

The morning's correspondence was not voluminous and Mr. Armitage had about reached the end of it when a cloud gathered on his forehead.

"Confound his infernal impudence! I'll attend to him!" he cried, shaking viciously the letter he held in his hand. "Here, take this!"

"Henry Lake & Co., Rochester, N. Y. Gentlemen: I have your esteemed favor of fifth. You order the goods and when they are sent to you I think you ought to pay for them and not be raising questions quantity after sales and—er—er no opportunity of seeing how many were broken and—er—er no basis of discount. If you don't pay at once, I will sue and no more nonsense. So please send check by next mail!"

"I want that to go out at once," he declared. While Miss Smith was ticking off the letter upon her typewriter, he picked up and studied carefully the weekly reports. He dropped them at last with a sigh. Was his long-time supremacy in the breakfast-food market to be overthrown? Competition was surely cutting in on Armitage & Barnes. The stenographer laid a letter-head upon his desk and the boss read:

Henry Lake & Co., Rochester, N. Y.,

GENTLEMEN: We regret that you found some short cases in last shipment. If you have any

Digitized by Google

similar trouble in future kindly advise us promptly in order that we may be able to fix responsibility. We shall be pleased to make the requested allowance upon your next order. Very respectfully,

"Armitage & Barnes," wrote the head of the firm at the bottom.

Miss Smith retired to her desk and began to tap the keys of her machine. The door opened and Harold Armitage, tall and athletic, and laughing out of clear gray eyes, entered with Edith, his wife, a splendid girl with eyes gloriously brown. Mr. Armitage saluted them cheerily.

"Hello, Edie! Hello, Harold!" he cried.

Edith flashed a loving smile upon him and Harold answered:

"'Morning, dad!" To which he added, "I just dropped in to tell you we've engaged a new advertising man."

Mr. Armitage jumped to his feet.

"You've what?" he cried.

"Hired a new man to write the 'ads,'" Harold repeated. "Sales are falling off and we've got to do something. We need something snappy in the literature, and I've got the fellow who can put it there."

His father thumped the top of the desk with a clenched fist. "Not on your life!" he emphatically exclaimed. "High art may mix with furniture and do no harm, but no monkeying with the advertising, if you please! The office fixings are just the outside of the engine-house and you can paint it any blessed color you like, but advertising is a very important part of the works and—hands off the works!"

Harold's face flushed. "Now, father," he said, striving to keep his voice level, "I think I know what I'm doing."

"You do, do you?" Mr. Armitage, senior asked with withering scorn. "Does it ever strike you, young man, that I have something to say about this business? Why, I have been writing the 'ads' for this house for thirty years—that's five years longer than you've been on earth!"

"Now, father," protested Harold, "what's the use of getting hot in the collar?"

"Who's getting hot in the collar?" shouted the older man.

"You are!"

"I'm not!"

"You are! You say you've been writing the 'ads' for thirty years. They're just about that much back of the hour. Get in with the procession. Look at the sales sheets!"

"Yes—well, I'll keep right on writing the 'ads.' I want you to understand, once for all, that I'm running this business, you bet your life!"

Like oil on troubled waters fell the soft, soothing voice of Edith.

"Dadsie!" she said.

Mr. Armitage turned toward her. Harold, in utter disgust, marched across the floor and stood with his face pasted against the window-pane.

"What is it, Edie?" asked the head of the firm in an altered tone.

"This has really been all my doing," she explained. "I told Harold to get Jake Buchmuller."

"Well," declared the old gentleman somewhat mollified, "if you have had anything to do with this, Edie, it may not be so bad. You always did have some sense, but Harold's noddle is full of Paris notions that would drive a plain business man mad."

"Yes," said Edith, pursuing her advantage, "I knew the work was wearing on you—you've been looking all done up, dadsie, for a month, really you have—so I told Harold that a man who could be so—so original in the point of view as Jake would be just the man to help you with the advertising."

Mr. Armitage looked shrewdly into her face, but no babe's was more ingenuous.

"Who is this Jake?" he asked.

"Surely you must remember, dadsie! The young man who helped pull Harold out of the river."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Armitage. "That young man!" It struck me that he was a little bit fresh."

"Well," Edith admitted, "he is a little bit that way. "But, dadsie, you mustn't mind that, you know—it's just his manner."

"Um! Suppose you bring him in some time and let me look at him," suggested the head of the firm.

Harold turned from the window, grinned at his wife, walked to the door and yelled:

"Jake!"

INTO the frame of the doorway moved a short, stout, young man with sharp, humorous features upon which was the stamp of an unshakable self-possession. The attire was jaunty, not to say striking; the manner one of disconcerting ease and confidence. With shrewd eyes he swept the office and his glance rested at

Digitized by Google

last upon the severe and serene Miss Smith, ticking away busily at her typewriter.

"Lovely—like a church window!" he exclaimed, bending over her desk and beaming down upon her.

"Try sea baths night and morning; you're too fresh," the unruffled lady shot back at him without deigning to raise her eyes from the keyboard.

"Oof!" gasped Mr. Buchmuller, placing his hand on his diaphragm. "How sudden on the recoil—what?"

His attention was attracted by the purpling face of the senior Mr. Armitage.

"Hello, Governor!" he saluted genially. "Has Harold put you close to the fact that I'm going to let you let me work for you?"

"My son," responded Mr. Armitage, "has recommended you for employment. But before we go any further, let me tell you something. I'll have no nonsense in this office during business hours. And another thing—I run this ranch! When I say a thing, it goes, you bet your life!"

"I bet my life," remarked Mr. Buchmuller obediently. "What's the answer?"

Mr. Armitage's choler was rising like steam in an overheated boiler. The scarlet that showed at the tip of his nose Edith read like a gauge. She put forward a little gloved hand and rested it on his arm. Instead of exploding, he let off steam in heavy, hoarse exhalations. Harold managed to get behind him and with amazing grimaces endeavored to warn Jake. But the thought of offense was not in the mind of Mr. Buchmuller. The silence irked him and he picked a sheet of paper up from the desk of his new boss. Upon it he read:

"Imitation is sincere flattery but poor food. Don't buy flattery! BUY FRAZZLED FRISKIES!"

"That's rotten, Governor," he declared bluntly.

Mr. Armitage gripped the chair to hold himself. "Perhaps you think you could improve upon it!" he sneered.

"Oi-yoi! I should yes guess!" Mr. Buchmuller replied, the sneer utterly wasted upon him. He turned toward the stenographer. "The little book-book, St. Cecilia!' he requested. "Now write—small type—'We fear no imitators.' Now display, 'Frazzled Friskies are Inimitable!' That better, Governor? Believe me, the American public chills on the squealer."

"Hum!" said Mr. Armitage. "Write it out, Miss Smith, and let me see what it looks like."

The stenographer typed it and handed the slip of paper to her employer.

"Not so bad," he admitted somewhat reluctantly, holding it at arm's length. "It will be better without the top line. We'll try it out in to-morrow's dailies, local."

Jake turned a smiling face upon Harold. The latter grinned encouragingly. "Oh, you'll get along all right with father," he declared.

"I bet my life," answered Jake. "By the way, Governor," he added, "you've got a pretty cheap-looking outfit here. You ought to have a flat-top mahogany desk."

It was too much. The gauge showed scarlet and Mr. Armitage choked when he tried to speak. He was beyond the point of articulate expression and the rage came from him in short, quick barks, like the exhaust of a motor-boat. *Bang!* went the cover of his roll-top desk. The head of the firm clapped his hat on and strode out of the office without a word. Mr. Buchmuller turned and looked after him. Slowly he raised his glance and, shading his eyes with his hands as if bothered by the sun, he whispered:

"Shooting for altitude! Oi-yoi!"

II

FOR a month the roll-top desk of Mr. Thomas Armitage knew him not. That the old gentleman was wasting no time was indicated by the flood of Western orders that flowed into the office. He wired them and mailed them from Chicago, from St. Louis, Kansas City and other trans-Mississippi communities. On the homeward journey he stopped off to have a chat with his partner in A-B Junction. He found Mr. Peter Barnes in a frame of mind cheerful beyond even his wonted humor.

"Come in, Tom!" Mr. Barnes cried delightedly, looking up from the desk he occupied in the factory office. "Come in! Business is whooping, ain't she?"

"Is she?" asked Mr. Armitage.

"You bet you!" Mr. Barnes answered, his sunny face ashine. "Look at the New York orders! It was a great stroke, Tom—putting that new advertising chap on; you always did have the big head on you!"

"Hum!" mumbled Mr. Armitage? "What's he done now?"

Digitized by Google

"Done?" exclaimed the mill man. "Haven't you seen the latest poster?"

"No."

"Well, here she is!" Mr. Barnes exclaimed joyously as he took a rolled sheet from a rack and spread it out on his desk.

Mr. Armitage took one look. In the center was an artistically colored picture of a stout, elderly gentleman with aggressive side-whiskers. His eyes were agleam with good humor, his ruddy cheeks aglow with health. A rosy smile encircled his mouth and was anchored in his dimples. His jaunty silk hat and the striped waistcoat that curved gracefully and snugly over his swelling diaphragm were symbols of prosperity. If ever the expression and the garments of a man proclaimed that the world was well with him, such a proclamation was here made. Underneath this picture was the caption in big black type:

Frazzled Friskies Fattened Father

Mr. Armitage glared at it, dumb with amazement, choking with indignation. Had that unconscionable rascal ventured to make an 'ad' of him? Had any employe of Armitage & Barnes dared to take a liberty with the boss? It was unbelievable. Yet there it was and—horrors! by this time it was probably in full and frolicsome display upon every sign-board along the railroad lines between New York and Chicago! He stood staring, paralyzed.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" roared Peter Barnes. "Ain't it funny! *Ain't* it funny!"

The Homeric guffaw broke the spell. Mr. Armitage turned on his partner, red-eyed with wrath. "Pete Barnes!" he cried. "Do you think that—that—that chromo is funny? Funny, I said, you grinning ape! Funny!"

Mr. Barnes looked at him, his mouth open, his laughter suddenly checked.

"Er-er-don't you?" he asked.

"I? I think it's the most foolish bit of dodgasted impudence I ever saw or heard of!" fumed Mr. Armitage. "And," he added, "I'm going right back to New York to fire that fellow and knock his block off, and then fire him again, you bet your life!"

"What? You're not going to fire him, Tom?" Mr. Barnes exclaimed in dismay. "Why, you know the Dental Dainties fellows had us going hard when he took hold, and look at the sales since! And this—why, what's the matter with this?"

He scrutinized the picture in an effort to find what it was that so enraged his partner.

"What's the matter with it!" Mr. Barnes echoed, his voice rising to a shriek. "Pete Barnes, you've been my partner for thirty-five years! We've stood side by side in many a tight place! And now you—*you* ask me what's the matter with it when a fresh youngster comes along and makes a cartoon of me for an advertisement for my own line of goods!"

"Hold up!" cried Mr. Barnes. "You don't mean to tell me you think that looks like you?"

"Sure it was meant for me!" answered Mr. Armitage, but there was just the slightest shade of uncertainty in his voice now.

"Why, Tom, you're sure cracked!" declared Mr. Barnes. "Do you reckon yourself to be as good-looking an old sport as that?"

"All right, Pete," said Mr. Armitage, his chin set, "you may think this is a good joke, but I tell you it's the kind of thing that breaks up discipline. I'm going right back to New York and that young man'll have to knuckle under or quit, you bet your life!"

"Think it over when you have one of Sally's dinners under your vest," advised his partner. "Come—we'll be going up to the house."

But the hand of Mr. Armitage was not to be stayed.

"I won't have time to-day, Pete," he said. "You'll have to make excuses for me to Sally. I'm going out on the eight-twelve."

"What? You wont stay over?" gasped Mr. Barnes.

"Not to-day," his partner answered. "Good-by, Pete! I'll wire you from New York."

THE heart of Mr. Armitage was not at ease as his train sped eastward. He had an uncomfortable impression that he had offended Pete. The fact that Barnes had failed to see the resemblance was also a disturbing factor—it made him a little uncertain, and indecision was torture to Mr. Armitage. He took a big cigar from his valise and entered the smokers' compartment. Biting off the end of the cigar he held it, dead, between his teeth, and glared out at the panoramic race of telegraph-poles and white farm fences past the square window. A great sign-board

Digitized by Google

broke upon his vision and he sat up with a start. It held the hated poster with its insulting caption:

Frazzled Friskies Fattened Father

Mr. Armitage turned away his offended eyes and, savagely striking a match on the sole of his shoe, held the flame to the end of his cigar. Then he looked across at a figure on the opposite seat. His practised eye picked out the signs of the drummer although the magazine the man held high hid his face as he sprawled back comfortably, an aureole of cigar-smoke floating above his head. From behind the magazine came a chuckle. Suspicion shone in Mr. Armitage's eyes. At length his *vis-à-vis* dropped the magazine and asked, *sans* ceremony, "What's your line?"

"Cereals," Mr. Armitage answered.

"Then you ought to be interested in this," said the stranger, holding out to him the open magazine upon whose pages the breakfast-food magnate beheld what he knew he would behold, the high-colored representation of that fat and happy old gentleman with the defiant side-whiskers, and the cheery, black-faced proclamation:

Frazzled Friskies Fattened Father

Keenly Mr. Armitage searched the features of the drummer. No gentle bossy on a green hillside could have a countenance more free of guile.

"Some good 'ad'?" observed the drummer.

"Do you think it's a good 'ad'?" Mr. Armitage questioned.

"Best thing in selling literature I've seen in a long time," the stranger replied with conviction. "Your people will have to hump themselves if you're in competition."

Again that disturbing question arose in the mind of Mr. Armitage. Was his imagination playing pranks with him? Was the thing really a good 'ad' and the insult he had sensed a purely fanciful thing? He tossed his half-smoked perfecto into a cuspidor and wandered back to his cushioned chair. Arranging himself comfortably he closed his eyes and tried to slumber. But upon his consciousness two voices grated, voices that came from across the aisle, one a fat, substantial voice, and the other a thin, attenuated voice. Opening his eyes he discovered that the fat voice belonged to a very thin, tall, young man while the thin voice proceeded from a still younger man who was almost circular in contour.

"A scream!" remarked the fat youth, pulling down a pair of striped cuffs with diamond buttons and adjusting a big horseshoe pin in his scarf.

His slender companion threw back the lapels of his frock coat the better to display a gorgeous waistcoat.

"Great make-up," he declared.

"Fierce, but fetching," agreed the thin-voiced fat youth.

Mr. Armitage sat up and glared at them.

"Funniest old gazebo that ever toddled down the pike," the slender youth observed.

Down the center of the car swayed a train-boy with a bundle of newspapers.

"Nuhyawk paypus!" he cried.

"Gimme a *Record*, kid," directed the fat young man.

The train boy slapped a newspaper on his knee, stuck the coin that was handed to him into his pocket, and swayed on down the car to the rear vestibule. The fat young man opened the newspaper. He emitted a little scream of joy.

"There he is!" he cried, holding up the newspaper so that his companion might see. "Side whiskers and all! Aye-aye, bo!"

One tiger-like spring carried Mr. Armitage across the aisle and one downward swing of his fist flattened the newspaper upon the fat knees of the young man who held it. As it lay there a familiar face stared up at Mr. Armitage and a maddening legend glared at him:

Frazzled Friskies Fattened Father

"What do you mean by it?" demanded the choleric gentleman.

With a face all amazement the fat youth looked at him. Then he turned a questioning glance upon his companion. The latter elevated his outstretched index finger until it was on a level with his right temple and with the point of it described three rapid revolutions around an imaginary axis. The light of comprehension shone in the eyes of the fat young man.

"Do you feel kind of strange-like, pop?" he asked solicitously.

Mr. Armitage's wrath gurgled in his throat.

"He's light in the nut," whispered the fat young man to the thin young man.

Digitized by Google

The latter tapped his forehead. "Cork to the core!" he answered.

With a rush Mr. Armitage's lost voice came back to him.

"Get up on your feet, you big fat stiff and I'll cork you! And you, too, you gibbering string-bean!" he cried, belligerently dancing up and down on the floor and posing his clenched fists. "I'll teach you to insult a gentleman in a public conveyance, you couple of cheap clothes-horses! These side whiskers are mine, you bet your life!"

"One minute!" cried the suddenly illuminated thin young man. "I guess you've got us wrong, pop. Me and my partner here, is Delauney & Dippelpfinger, the screamingly funny voderveel team you've probably read about a great deal. We was doping out a new sketch in which Dippy here was to create a character of a fat, jolly old sport, and the picture there was just the thing. We wasn't thinking about you at all."

"You see," broke in Mr. Dippelpfinger, pointing with a fat thumb at the advertisement, "he's just the gray-whiskered kid we was dreaming about. He has the giggley face, while—if you'll excuse a few personal remarks—your cast of countenance has all the subtle humor of a mortuary chapel. You see it's a different thing altogether, don't you?"

"Sure," Mr. Delauney earnestly assured him. "We ain't no roughhouse roysterers, pop, honest. Why, the last thing Dippy and me would think of would be to push an insult at a feeble old goat. Ain't it straight dope, Dippy?"

They were obviously sincere and Mr. Armitage, after mumbling confused apologies, hastened to hide his mortification from his interested fellow passengers by returning to the smokers' compartment.

III

THERE was still a torturing doubt in his soul when he stood at the door of his private office the following morning, but all thought of what he had suffered was instantly blotted out by the new outrage that obtruded itself upon his sense of sight. One corner of the square room had been railed off in gleaming brass and within the enclosure lay a heavy rug. Upon the rug stood a shiny flat-top desk and back of the desk sat Mr. Jake Buchmuller. Mr. Buchmuller raised his eyes from his work and they glowed with pleasure.

"Why, good morning, Governor!" he saluted. "When did you get back?"

"What does this mean?" sternly demanded the head of the concern with an accusing finger pointed at the luxurious appointments.

"Oh!" Jake answered, unperturbed. "It was too noisy for my think-box out there with the *hoi-polloi* and I thought it would be handier for you to have me in here under your eye. So I get in the boat with Nellie."

Mr. Armitage glanced quickly down at his stenographer. Thank heaven she was unchanged!

"Good morning, Miss Smith!" he said.

"Good morning, Mr. Armitage," she said with the old politeness that soothed his temper with its familiarity.

He walked to his desk, unlocked it and threw back the top. Miss Smith laid before him a basket of letters she had kept for his personal attention, and Jake marveled at the speed and certitude with which the old gentleman handled the puzzling propositions with which he had to deal. "Good work for the old bird!" he mused, respect for his employer increasing considerably. He made no audible observation however, until the steady clicking of Miss Smith's machine indicated that her employer was through with the correspondence.

"Business is fine," he then observed.

"Not so bad," Mr. Armitage answered, his gaze upon the ceiling.

"What did you think of the poster?"

The finger-tips of Mr. Armitage whitened as he pressed them against the arms of his chair.

"What poster?" he asked calmly.

"Our poster."

"*Our* poster?" Mr. Armitage lost interest in the ceiling and fixed his eyes keenly upon Mr. Buchmuller.

"Sure," answered that unconscious person. "I furnished the text and you the illustration."

"I knew it! I knew it!" yelled the head of the firm, his blazing eyes and glowing nose indicative of the explosive forces boiling within him. Why, you—you——"

The office door opened with a bang and Edith Barnes ran into the room, a warm welcome in her big brown eyes.

"Why, dadsie!" she cried delightedly, rushing across the floor and throwing her

Digitized by Google

arms around his neck. "When did you get back?"

Mr. Armitage emerged from the smother of kisses, catching his breath, and, holding his impetuous daughter-in-law at arm's length, looked at her rather sheepishly.

"Whew!" he gasped.

"And how did you leave pop and mother?"

"They're all right—that is, pop is; I had to hurry to catch a train and didn't get a chance to see mother," he answered with some confusion.

"Oh, she'll feel so bad!" Edith pouted. "But I'm awful glad you're back, because Harold has been so busy he's missed you awfully. Ever since you got Jake to help you the orders have been coming in in showers. Hasn't he been just splendid?"

Mr. Armitage looked into the big brown eyes. They were very like the eyes of Pete Barnes. He swallowed a lump in his throat and by main force jammed the words over the tip of his tongue one by one:

"Mr. Buchmuller has done er-er remarkable work. Yes, I should say very, very remarkable work."

"I'm so glad you're pleased," bubbled Edith. "Harold will be delighted. I must hurry off now, because I'm to meet him at the art-builders."

"Eh?" asked Mr. Armitage suspiciously. "What's he doing there?"

"Making arrangements to tear out the wall down-stairs and put in a show front. The present appearance of the building is rather shabby, Harold thinks. I think myself it offends the artistic sense."

With a flashing smile she turned and swept through the door. Jake picked up his hat and approached the desk.

"I've got to drop around to the printer's," he said. "Is there anything I can do for you while I'm out?"

"No!" barked Mr. Armitage.

"Don't you think I'd better stop at the furniture store and have them send you something nobby in the desk line?" Jake suggested.

"Get out! Get out! Get out!" screamed the head of the firm.

But Mr. Buchmuller hastened not his departure. His employer saw him lean over the desk of the stenographer and heard him ask tenderly:

"Betty want a bon-bon?"

"Menaud's?"

"H'm!"

"I don't mind if I do," said Miss Smith.

Mr. Armitage stared at his stenographer.

"Mr. Buchmuller seems quite popular," he said at last.

"Yes, sir," answered Miss Smith.

Her employer snorted.

"Mr. Harold thought it was nice of him not to accept that Dental Dainties' offer."

"Eh?" exclaimed Mr. Armitage, failing to notice the momentous fact that his stenographer had volunteered a remark for the first time since she was employed by his concern.

"Yes," Miss Smith continued. "They wanted to get him—after the appearance of the big 'ad.'"

"What big 'ad'?" Mr. Armitage asked.

"'Frazzled Friskies Fattened Father.'" replied the young lady, her eyes on her keyboard.

Mr. Armitage stiffened in his chair. But after a few minutes he murmured to himself:

"They want him, do they? Well they won't get him, you bet your life!"

IV

IT SEEMED as if it were the last flash of the old spirit, however. In the days that followed it was a strange, altered Mr. Armitage who presided over the New York office. His eye was dull, his side-whiskers pendulous; his chin sagged, his shoulders were slack. Increasing business failed to cheer him although it had been once the very breath in his nostrils. He heard that the Dental Dainties' concern was in a bad way without any of the glow of satisfaction that such a triumph would have generated in the old days.

Jake did nothing in particular to excite him to wrath and beyond question the conceits of the new advertising man were attracting popular attention and his quips were advertising Frazzled Friskies through the unpaid boys in the streets and in the jokes of music-hall comedians whose names were not on the Armitage & Barnes' pay-sheet. But the old gentleman was lethargic. Nothing reached in and touched him. He did his day's work, but without the old enthusiasm.

It was ten o'clock when he arrived at his office one morning, a thing without precedent when he was in town. He looked at the stenographer's desk and then another unprecedented circumstance impinged upon

Digitized by Google

his consciousness. Miss Smith was not at her desk. An hour he waited for her, irritably arranging the huge pile of mail. His patience utterly exhausted, he turned to Jake and grumbled:

"What's the matter with Miss Smith? Has she gone crazy like the rest of you?"

"Miss Smith?" said Mr. Buchmuller. "Why, she won't be here any more. She got married last night."

"Married?" gasped Mr. Armitage. His hands fell to his sides.

"Well I should guess yes!" Jake assured him.

"And who—who——?"

"Muh!" exclaimed Jake proudly. "Who else?"

His speechless employer glared at him.

Jake smiled at him cheerfully. "I've engaged a new girl for you," he announced comfortingly. "She'll be here this afternoon."

Still Mr. Armitage stared in stony silence.

"And by the way, Governor," Jake said coaxingly, "why don't you get yourself a new desk? You've got to have *front* in these days, you know. And that old thing was sure brought here on a horse-car drawn by a dinosaur when the Tenderloin was at Fourteenth Street and the ferocious mammoth roamed the Bronx wilderness."

Mr. Armitage gripped the arm-rests of his chair and shook himself vigorously. Back into his eyes came the old fighting gleam. His side-whiskers stiffened, his chin set in the old mold of determination, his shoulders came forward defiantly.

"Mr. Buchmuller," he ordered, "get a pad and pencil!"

Jake obeyed, glancing out of the corners of his eyes at his employer.

"Take this memo.!"

Mr. Buchmuller poised the pencil.

"Have plate-glass windows, single pane, installed in windows of private office!"

Jake wrote it down.

"Have the walls papered in pink, satin-finished stuff with gold molding. Put in a parquet floor and get three tiger-skin rugs for it!"

"Yep!" gasped Jake.

"A set of Nile-green silk curtains for the windows. And a half-dozen rosewood chairs upholstered in leather, a swivel desk-chair, upholstery ditto, and an eight-by-four polished rosewood desk with a flat top!"

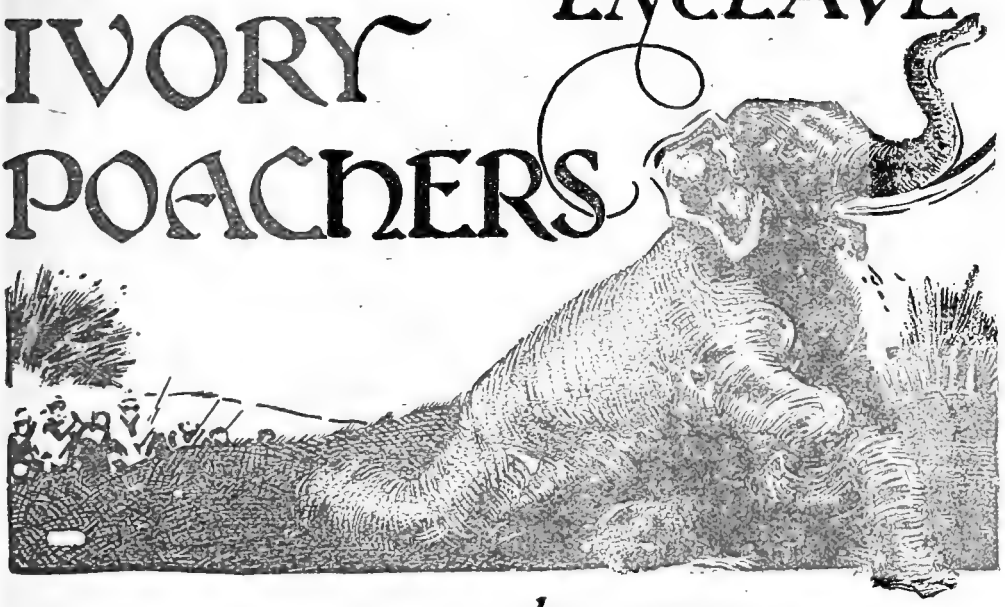
"Yes, *sir*!" said Jake humbly.

Mr. Armitage looked down at the bowed head and a rosy smile encircled his mouth and anchored itself in the dimples of his cheeks.

"And," he concluded, inserting his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat and grandly extending the open palms, "get a big gilt clock for that corner and an open fireplace with a gas-log. I'm going to make this place look like somthing, I am! Harold thinks he's been doing something in the high-art line out yonder, but Harold, despite all that he has studied of these things, is lacking somewhat in the—what do you call it?—the artistic temperament. I'm going to have some style about this place, you bet your life!"

Digitized by Google

The IVORY POACHERS of the LADO ENCLAVE



by W. Robert Foran

There's a legion that never was 'listed,
That carries no colors or crest,
But, split in a thousand detachments,
Is breaking the road for the rest.—KIPLING.

I WAS trailing ex-President Theodore Roosevelt through Uganda on the last stages of his year's hunting-trip in Central Africa, being the only newspaper correspondent to remain in the field out of the small army of them who had set out with him from New York in March, 1909, when my travels took me to the shores of the Albert Nyanza, from which the White Nile obtains its source. Here are the headquarters of the small body of men who are braving all manner of dangers to make a fortune by elephant-hunting in "No Man's Land," as the Lado Enclave territory of the Belgian Congo, bordering on the great River Nile, has been termed.

Many of these men were personally known to me during my residence in British East Africa as a Government official. I had acquired a wholesome respect for these hardy and intrepid tamers of the uncivilized sections of the great equatorial hinterland of Central Africa, and what I saw and heard of them at the Albert Nyanza and on the banks of the Nile did not lessen my regard for them as men. Perhaps their calling as elephant-poachers may not have been regular in the eyes of the law, but then there was such an element of danger connected with their work that the offenses of which they were guilty paled before all other considerations, and one is forced to concede to them the possession of the acme of pluck. The freebooter or soldier of fortune is ever a picturesque figure and the Congo poachers amply fill this rôle.

I had marched one hundred and sixty-five miles across the dreary, swelteringly hot Uganda country, and it was with feelings of extreme relief that I saw the shimmering expanse of the waters of the Albert Nyanza from the rugged hill-tops overlooking Butiaba, the small port on the sandy shore of the lake. It is a magnificent view, for the lake lies below the 1,800-foot escarpment. The road winds from the bottom of the cliffs across a sandy plain, which is furrowed here and there by the deep tracks of ele-

Digitized by Google

phant and hippopotamus. The heat is so great that Dante's Inferno could not well be worse. It is a veritable furnace.

I pitched camp on the site of the recent Roosevelt encampment within one hundred feet of the lake. There was no shade from the tropical sun's penetrating rays, but a cool breeze off the lake made things somewhat more bearable. I feasted my eyes on the fair expanse of water, which was rufiled into miniature waves by the breeze. The dull boom of the surf on the shore was music in my ears.

Butiaba is nothing more than a wood and iron store, a couple of similarly constructed houses for the engineers employed on the lake steamers, and a few native villages; for the rest, a vast dried-up plain with sandy soil, a small pier, and a shed or two near it for the storing of tools and for the construction of the small steam launches used on the lake. There you have a description of the Butiaba I camped at on January 14, 1910.

I HAD heard from natives that one of the Congo poachers was in camp at Butiaba, but none of them seemed to know his name and I was at a loss to know who he might be. I remembered that there were a number of men whom I knew intimately poaching in this district, and I wondered whether perchance I was to be given an opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with one of them. Perhaps it might be John Boyes, nicknamed "King of the Kikuyu"; or "Karamoja" Bell, the mightiest of elephant-hunters; the Honorable Rupert Craven, brother of Earl Craven; young Quentin Grogan, brother of Captain Ewart S. Grogan of Cape-to-Cairo fame; Pickering, a noted elephant-hunter; Bennett, an ex-engineer of the Nile launches; W. Buckley, a partner of Pickering's; or Pearson, to say nothing of many others whom I had met from time to time. I mention them by their correct names, for they made no secret of their calling and I feel sure that I am not committing any indiscretion by so doing.

Each one of these men has a history, and each and every one of them can tell thrilling tales of his experiences not only in the Congo but also in every other part of Africa.

My interested conjectures as to who the man at Butiaba might be were soon set at rest. It is the custom for all white men in Africa to call on any other white man who may camp in their vicinity, and so it was not long before the "poacher" came to my camp to see me. It proved to be Bennett, the ex-engineer of the Uganda Nile fleet, who had abandoned his professional calling for the more thrilling and lucrative work of shooting elephants for their ivory. For many years he had been in charge of the small steam launch plying between Butiaba and Nimule on the Nile, and during these years he had done much shooting on the banks of the river. His haul of ivory added each year to his small income as a launch engineer, so that it was a bad year indeed when he did not double, nay treble, his paltry salary. He had been with Winston Churchill, when the latter made his trip up the Nile on the Government flotilla when inspecting East Africa and Uganda in his official capacity as Under Secretary of State for the Colonies.

This is the story of a man, as told to me on my first night in camp at Butiaba, sitting in my tent beating off the attack of greedy mosquitos while entertaining Bennett with the aid of my limited supply of whisky. The story was so startling that often I had to pinch myself during its recital to satisfy myself that I was not dreaming of the days of Emin Pasha and Stanley as the result of the association of my surroundings.

I noticed that his hands were badly lacerated, in fact in a fearful state, and all the time we conversed about generalities I was wondering what had been the cause. Presently the conversation turned to the subject of elephant-shooting, and I asked him how he was progressing with his quest for ivory. I had got him interested now and leaned back in my easy camp-chair to listen.

He said he had just returned from the Congo, where he had been shooting elephants for some months at the back of Mahagi, and that he had been very successful up to a certain point, but then had lost all his hard-gotten ivory and all his effects, owing to an attack from the natives. His subsequent narrative was an enthralling one, and I wish that it were possible for me to reproduce it exactly as he told it to me on that still African night.

THE CAPTURE OF BENNETT BY SAVAGES

"I GOT on very well with the natives and had got some very fine tusks," he continued. "One day I was out after some elephants, which had been located by the na-

Digitized by Google

tives for me, and came across four huge tuskers. I fired at the biggest, but only succeeded in mortally wounding it. He charged through the tall elephant-grass toward me, with his huge ears outspread and his trunk raised high above his head. He screamed fearfully with rage and pain and the sight was indeed a terrifying one. I fired at point-plank range and again hit him mortally. The elephant continued his charge and one of my native servants failed to get out of his way. The elephant pushed the native to one side with his tusk in passing and the boy fell to the ground without a sound. The elephant fell down dead a short distance away.

"The three remaining elephants were wild with rage and rushed hither and thither, tearing down the trees in all directions as if they had been made of paper, screaming shrilly all the time. It was an anxious moment for me, for I was within fifty feet of them at the time of my first shot. At last they made off across country toward the lake, and I followed them up and succeeded in bagging all three of them in three shots at close range.

"I returned to look for my native servant, thinking that he would be watching over my first tusker. To my astonishment I found the boy lying dead where he had fallen when the elephant bowled him over. I examined him carefully and found that no bones had been fractured, nor was there a mark on his body. He must have died from shock at the terrifying experience.

"On or about December 10th I moved off farther inland after a big herd and camped, leaving my main camp two days behind me. Within a radius of twenty miles of me there were four other white poachers, namely, Pearson, Dickinson, Boyes and Knowles. The natives appeared perfectly friendly to me. On my first night in camp they visited me, dancing and singing round my campfire. I suspected no treachery from them; on the contrary they appeared willing to keep me informed of the movements of the elephants and of the Belgian military patrol, which was operating in the district, endeavoring to capture us poachers.

"Next day the same thing happened and I was asked to attend to the leg of one of the tribesmen who had been injured badly in a native brawl. I bathed the wound and was winding a bandage round the wounded leg when I suddenly felt my wrists seized. A rope was quickly cast round my neck, other ropes were fastened round my legs and arms, and I was jerked roughly off the camp-stool on which I was sitting. Then the natives seized my guns, and all my camp equipment was deliberately destroyed before my eyes. A native seized my helmet and insolently paraded before me with it on his own head. I was then beaten savagely across the back of the hands and on the body with sticks. My hands burst open, hurting fearfully, and the sun beat down upon my head with terrific force.

"I was made to march, with my captors jeering at me and subjecting me to awful indignities, for four whole days through the broiling sun until their powerful chief's village was reached. Here the chief came forward and shook me by my wounded and manacled hands, bidding his followers release me. He was a fine-looking old savage, with a very intelligent face, standing over six feet high.

"On the orders of the chief I was offered milk to drink and given a native hut to live in as a prisoner under a strong guard. My food during this time consisted of raw meat and very little of that. After some days of torture, wondering what they intended to do with me, I was haled before the chief and given a public trial. I could understand what they were saying, and it appeared that all, except the chief, were in favor of my death. Fortunately for me, the chief's wishes prevailed and I was released and allowed to return to Mahagi, on my giving a guaranty that I would never again hunt in this district. I was threatened with instant death and torture if I was caught again by them.

"Then began six days' journey through the blazing African sun with all my clothes in rags, no helmet or hat, no water, and no food except what I could find by the way, which was very little, seeing that I had no rifle. All my camp equipment, stores and rifles had been taken away from me and I had lost all my ivory, the result of many months' arduous work in the Congo. This meant a loss of something like $5,000 to me and it will be difficult to get together another outfit.

"At last, after days of infinite torture, I reached the camp of a Belgian official near Mahagi, who clothed and fed me, promising me that the natives would be punished. This was indeed kind of him, for it must be

Digitized by Google

remembered that I was a poacher in the Belgian territory and liable to ten years imprisonment if captured by the Belgians in the act of poaching ivory. I have come to Butiaba to try and get together another outfit and so return to the Mahagi district to replace my losses. I am determined to make up my lost time and feel confident that I can do so."

I wish that I could tell the tale with the unaffected simplicity and nothing-out-of-the-ordinary manner in which Bennett told it to me. These men are made of great stuff and are indeed men of the class to which Kipling refers in his delightful poem, "The Lost Legion."

I GATHERED that this chief is a very powerful man and has conquered all the tribes in his neighborhood, as well as cutting up several Belgian armed parties who have been sent against him from time to time. Only a few weeks before he captured Bennett, he seized an Italian poacher named Bushieri, who was ivory-hunting near his village, and killed him. He cut off his head, arms and legs and placed them on trees all round his village, where they were putrifying when Bennett was taken there. This chief has a well-armed and drilled following composed of Sudanese deserters from the Egyptian army or from the old Uganda Mutineers and all the riffraff from Uganda and the Nile provinces.

No other white man has ever been allowed to go to his village, or, for that matter, near it. Bennett was extraordinarily lucky to escape as he did without being killed. His story is very thrilling, for one does not often hear of white men being harmed by natives in Central Africa. It goes to prove that the Belgian authority is not worth much in the Congo, otherwise this would never have happened. In British or German territory it would not occur, and if by any chance it did, the natives would be so severely punished that it would never happen again.

The next day I left by launch for Koba, the first Government post on the Nile. Here I found a small village of white elephant-poachers, but all of them were away after ivory in the Congo at the time of my visit. They live on the British side of the Nile and make periodical excursions into the Congo after ivory. The British Government allows Congo ivory to pass through its territory on payment of twenty-five per cent. custom duty, and in a way this encourages the poachers, for they are allowed to shoot only two, or at most three, elephants each year in East Africa or Uganda, on payment of a $250 license. In the Congo no license is necessary and they may shoot as many tuskers as they can, without a license, if they can evade being captured by the Belgians or the natives.

THE EXCEPTIONAL DANGERS OF ELEPHANT-HUNTING

EACH man takes untold risks when he follows this calling. Not only does he chance ten years' imprisonment in a chain-gang in the interior of the Congo, if caught by the Belgians, but he also takes his life in his hands every time he shoots an elephant, for he crawls into a herd through the fifteen- or twenty-foot high grass, selects the biggest bull and then shoots it at a range of from ten to fifteen yards. No one who has not tried elephant-shooting can realize the terrifying aspect of a herd of elephants when you are close to them. They move so silently, and yet each one is capable of crushing the life out of any man who dares disturb their peace.

To penetrate the dense bush or to tramp through swampy thorn country close on the heels of a mighty tusker whose trunk, foot and tusk are each capable of inflicting instant death is, as I can state truthfully from my own experience, one of the most exciting phases of sport enjoyed by the big-game hunter. To face a bull elephant, or even worse, a cow elephant, with gigantic ears outstretched to detect the pursuer's approach, and with trunk uplifted straight in the air to catch his scent, and to know that between you and your quarry there is a distance of but a few paces, is to experience a sensation that can never be forgotten. A false move, a crackling twig, and the spell is broken. That mighty bulk, but a second before motionless, plunges forward with curved trunk and head raised, giving vent to an unearthly shriek which in itself is enough to spoil the aim of any of the best marksmen, and wo betide the hunter who gets in the way of the charge!

Yet this is not all the danger the poacher encounters, as the story of Bennett's misadventure will amply prove. The natives have never been properly brought under control and are treacherous, liars, and base in every conceivable way.

Digitized by Google

AT KOBA I found the houses, made of grass and mud, of John Boyes, the Honorable Rupert Craven, and of Pickering and Buckley. "Karamoja" Bell had given up poaching for the time being, as he had made more than sufficient out of it to satisfy all his desires. Bell is a young Englishman, who has a big estate in England and an annual rent-roll of some $15,000. He came out to Central Africa seeking adventure in 1902, when only eighteen years of age, and at once turned his attention to elephant-hunting.

He is a marvelous shot and can throw a bottle into the air and smash it to pieces with one shot from his .303 rifle. He is one of those hunters who use nothing heavier than a .303 Lee-Enfield or .256 Mannlicher rifle for all game, large or small. He has recently announced that he is willing to bet $500 that he will go into a herd of elephants and kill a bull with one shot from a rook rifle. His reputation is too established for any one to doubt his success in such a venture. He is, perhaps, the most famous of the Congo elephant-poachers, and it is said of him that he once went into the Congo with 350 cartridges and came out with 347 pairs of elephant tusks. I can well believe it, for I have often seen him shoot. He has also made a great reputation in East Africa in the Karamoja district, hence his peculiar nickname.

I am told that in the last eight years Bell has spent $100,000 in seeking ivory and has made $200,000, so that he has cleared one hundred per cent. He is a most lovable man and is as popular with every one, except the Belgians, as man could wish to be. There is nothing that he dares not do and, as for fear, it is an unknown quantity with him.

To my deep regret I found the grave of my old friend, the Honorable Charles Craven, at Koba. He had died there from blackwater fever only a few months before my arrival, and his brother, with whom he was in partnership in the ivory-poaching business, had gone to England to try to forget his loss. Poor Charles Craven, I can see him now, one of the finest figures of a man it were possible to meet in a day's march. He had been a lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards in London, and had won the heavyweight boxing championship of the officers of the army. His death came as a sad blow to all who knew him in Africa. It was distressing to see his grave in the loneliness of the great barren desert bordering the Nile, far from friends and comrades.

BOYES, KING OF THE KIKUYU

JOHN BOYES, alias "King of the Kikuyu," was, unfortunately, poaching in the Congo. I should have liked to renew my acquaintance with him, for he is a remarkable character. Boyes was at one time an able-bodied seaman on a merchant vessel and was wrecked, or deserted, I know not which, at Zanzibar, many years previous to my first meeting with him in 1904. He had spent all his time cattle-trading and ivory-hunting in the wilds, and for many years made the territory of the Akikuyu tribe his headquarters. He had become blood-brother to their king, Kinanjui, and then had made himself virtually their king.

These were stirring times for him, for he ran foul of the Government and the story goes that he secured his pardon only by leading, through his native levies, the then governor of East Africa, Sir Charles Eliot, into an unknown territory, demanding as the price of rescue his immunity from arrest for any offenses of the past.

He has led expeditions through Abyssinia and many other outlandish parts of the great African hinterland where few men dare to go, and now, after many years of hardships and hairbreadth escapes, has settled down to the life of an elephant-poacher, which he considers child's play. I am told that he is making something like $20,000 each year, but this can not last, for the days of the poacher were over when Great Britain took over the Lado Enclave territory of the Congo from the Belgians in June, 1910.

Pickering and Buckley, the two partners, were away on an expedition after ivory in German East Africa when I reached Koba, and so I missed meeting them. Pickering is a young man, but he has had some experiences which might make many an older man quail. Not so very long ago he was captured red-handed by the Belgian officials after he had poached a ton of ivory, and was on his way back to the Nile to take it over into British territory. All his ivory, guns, ammunition, and stores were confiscated and the Belgian officer proudly led Pickering as a prisoner to his station at Mahagi. While there in jail awaiting trial, Pickering managed to find out from the official that he

Digitized by Google

was going to leave one night on a chase after some other poachers whom he had located. Pickering found out the direction the Belgian was to go, and on the night the latter started out Pickering made his escape and after a trying two days' march reached a place on the Nile opposite Koba.

Here he hastily refitted and started back again on the trail of the Belgian. He shot one and a half tons of ivory in three days and got it safely back into British country without being caught. He certainly had the laugh on the Belgians, for he had also sent warning to the other poachers by natives and they were thus able to escape. You can imagine what pluck this youngster had when I say that if he had been caught he would have spent the remainder of his life in a native chain-gang in the interior of the Congo, where time alone would have relieved him from his torments.

A FEW days after leaving Koba I marched into Wadelai, an old deserted Government station on the Nile, opposite which is the ruin of Emin Pasha's old fort. The Nile is narrowest at this point and young Quentin Grogan and Pearson have made this their headquarters for their raids into the Congo. They have built mud and grass houses on the bank of the Nile, where the mosquito buzzes and bites, where their nightly sleep and daily work is interrupted by the noisy splashes and grunts of the hippo in the river to the front of them and by the roaring of lions behind them. Sometimes the crocodiles pay them unwelcome attention, but these drawbacks do not appear to worry them much.

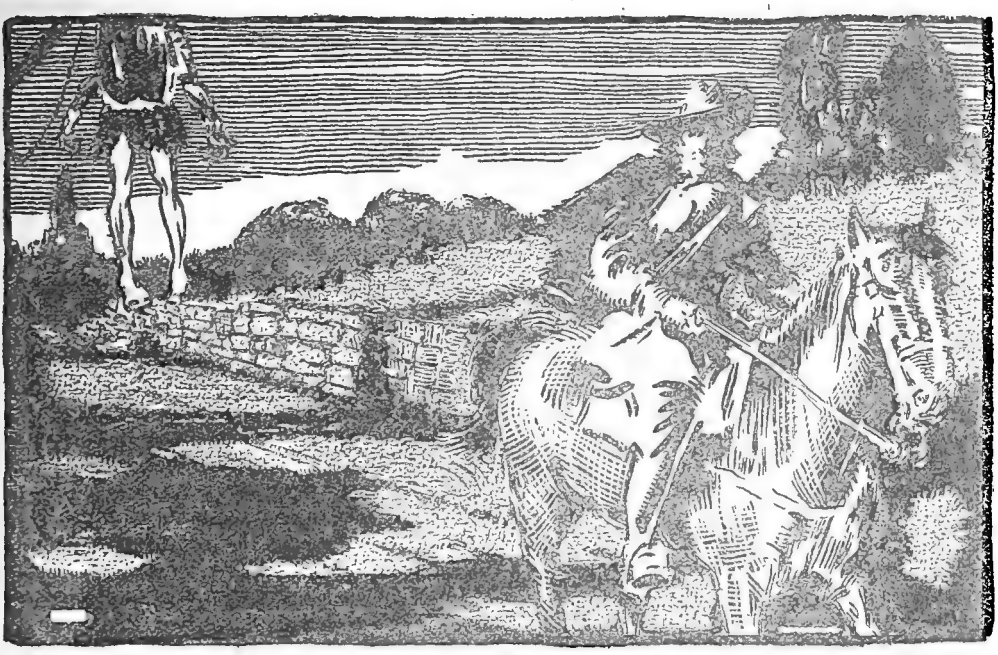
Every now and then, when the coast is reported clear of the patrols of the Belgians, the poachers cross the river in flimsy native dugout canoes and make a raid into the heart of the Enclave, returning to their headquarters when they have enough ivory to load each of their native porters. It is an easy life for them, as they will tell you, for they make good money and love the adventure. It is true that at times they are prostrated with the terrible malarial fever, but they take this as a matter of course and are prepared to put up with it as long as the opportunities for poaching ivory exist.

Young Grogan is an ex-middy in the British Navy and is a younger brother of Captain Ewart S. Grogan who made himself famous by marching through from the Cape to Cairo. Quentin was engaged by Colonel Roosevelt on his recent expedition to locate the white rhinoceri for him. Colonel Roosevelt and all his party formed a strong attachment for this hardy and fearless youngster. He told me that he finds ivory-poaching much more lucrative and exciting than seamanship, and I can well believe him.

Such are a few of the men who, up to a few months ago, were earning fame and money by their intrepid hunting of the mammoth destroyer of the native crops in the Congo. These days are over now, for with the advent of the British rule their poaching must cease.

That they are pioneers and are "breaking the road for the rest" goes without saying, for the Belgians had only three stations in all this vast territory and were never able effectually to control the natives or the country. These poachers have been carefully instilling into the natives a wholesome respect for the good qualities of the white race, and so the Sudan Government officials will find little difficulty in administering this the newest addition to the Imperial Crown.

Digitized by Google



CAPTAIN CURLEW'S ATONEMENT

by C. Langton CLARKE

SURELY never was any man in a viler temper than was I, Roger Coverdale, King's man and gentleman of the road, as I sat my horse by a holly hedge on the Great North Road, some five leagues south of the fair city of York, and waited in vain for the coach of my Lord Gresham whom I had left ten miles back, drinking sack in the tavern parlor and casting sheep's eyes at the fair hostess.

For three hours had I hearkened to the rain pattering on the leaves and watched the little streams from the points of my holsters trickle down the smooth shoulders of my horse, sorrel once, but now black with wet. There was a raw and bitter wind abroad that night—a wind that sought me out beneath the drenched cloak and made me shiver.

I began to mislike me of the life I had taken to, free and adventurous as it was, and one which suited my wild spirit. I bethought me more than once of my old father in the Derbyshire manor-house, where the Coverdales had dwelt since the Flood; of my mother, silver-haired and calm-eyed, moving among her wenches like a queen, and of my sisters, Deborah and Dorothy.

My father was a stanch King's man, and had fought at Edgehill and Naseby with six stout lads of Derbyshire at his back. When I was but a youngster I had heard him tell tales of field and camp which fired my blood, and made me hate the smug-faced hell-fighters who rode in Oliver's army as I hated the snakes I used to seek and crush in Gorsham woods.

And as these thoughts came to me, and the love of home and kin grew upon me, I cursed the day when I quarreled with my father and rode away into the world with a high head and an empty pocket, to make my fortune.

And what a fortune had been mine! To haunt the roads by night, with a vizard over my face, and a pistol ever ready to my hand, or to royster it in inns, where, be sure, I was always welcome, when my

Digitized by Google

pockets were bursting with the crowns taken at pistol-point from some hapless traveler. The women looked kindly upon me, for my form was strong above that of most men, and the Coverdale features have always found favor. My manner was ever courteous to young and old, and moreover they knew or guessed my calling, which has ever a strange fascination for the sex—admiration for the wild and dashing present, and mayhap a dash of pity for the future, when the gay young spark shall go to the gallows with a nosegay at his breast, and a cold heart in his bosom for all his light demeanor.

Now as I sat, in no cheerful mood, thinking of all these things, and half minded to turn honest man for a change, there came to my ears from far down the road a sound which straightened me in the saddle. 'Twas the sound of a horse's feet in mud and water, and a man's voice raised in a careless snatch of song.

The rain had ceased, and the moon was shining through a ragged rift, making the wet boulders glisten and the great ruts full of water gleam like bars of silver.

Nearer and nearer came the solitary rider, until he rose a small hill, where the road dipped some fifty yards away, and I saw him plainly—a young gentleman, good to look upon, with fair hair lying wet on the shoulders of a dark riding-coat, and mounted on a powerful gray horse. He was singing a song to Cynthia, which, from the vileness of the doggerel, I doubt he had himself indited to his mistress.

NOW at sight of him so near, all the dark thoughts which had oppressed me fled away. Doubtless he had a crown or a jewel about him, and, cavalier as he was, by the cut of his dress and the feather which drooped from his broad beaver, he must natheless pay me toll. Had he been a Roundhead I had robbed him with more pleasure, and maybe lent him a kick or two to boot, as I had done before to many another of the rascals, but though he was of my own party he must stand and deliver. So when he was but a score of yards away I touched Buckskin with the spur and laid him across the road, while I trained a pistol full on a silver buckle which gleamed on the stranger's breast.

The young gentleman checked his song and swore a round oath as he pulled the gray back on his haunches.

"A murrain seize you, you rascal!" he cried. "What the plague right have you to stop honest men on the King's road?"

"Gently, gently, Master Strephon," I answered,—for so he had named himself in his song. "I have the right which comes of an empty purse and a pair of pistols, of which last I have the wit to see that you have none. Doubtless, however, your purse is overweighty for you. So I will e'en relieve you of the burden and drink your health every time I spend a fat crown, so you may come to a ripe old age and not die before your time on a muddy road."

The young gentleman said nought in reply to my humor, but swore again beneath his breath. Then he did a thing for which I could have slain him at the time, though I held him all the higher for it when my blood had cooled, for he thrust his spurs into the gray, and, unarmed as he was, rode straight at me!

The suddenness of his attack flurried me, and I pulled trigger on him as he came like a thunderbolt. Even as I fired, Buckskin reared, and the ball did but clip one of his fair curls. Then, ere I could draw the other barker or get to my sword, he was upon me and had thrown one arm about my neck, while with the other hand he tore the vizard from my face.

"Dog of a highwayman!" he said, as he looked into my eyes in the moonlight. "You shall swing for this, if God gives me grace to drag you in to York at my stirrup!"

Surprised as I was, the thought came across me that he had sworn overmuch to call on the Lord with a good grace, but ere I could put forth my strength, which was far greater than his, he had wrenched me from the saddle and flung me full length on the road.

Half stunned by the shock of the fall, I rose to my knees, groping for the hilt of my sword, but the sound of hurrying hoofs told me there would be little need of it. Doubtless his horse had taken fright and fled, for I could hear how the rider cursed and swore at the beast for its cowardice. Had he come back I doubt he could have mastered me, so shaken was I. Better for us both had he done so.

With many a curse at my evil luck, for never had man so laid me on my back before, and I was wont to be feared, I

Digitized by Google

scraped the mud from my clothes and, picking up the pistol from the road where it had fallen, thrust it back into the sodden holster. Then I mounted and rode south at a gallop, for I had never yet had to take a man's life, save on the field of honor and with all due formalities, and I had no lust to have the blood of that young hothead on my hands, should he come back to seek me.

Gradually the feel of my horse moving smoothly beneath me, and the rush of the night air past my ears, restored me to myself, and I could laugh at the misadventure that had befallen me. One thing alone troubled me, and that was that the young gentleman had seen my face. However, I comforted myself with the thought that there was but small chance of our meeting again, or of his calling me to account before witnesses. Should such an encounter ever come about, I must trust to luck and my own hand to help me out.

So, with a little shrinking of the heart, I rode by the gibbet, where Harry Deverill, who kept the road some two years ago, and with whom I had cracked many a flagon, swung in chains as a warning to other birds of his feather, and turned into a byway which led to an ancient inn, whose host was in my pay, and where the women were kind and the wine of the best.

BUT as Buckskin swung round the turn of the road I found my second adventure of the night and, ere I could draw rein, had all but ridden into a group of persons gathered about the door of a great six-horse coach.

Standing by the front wheel was a tall man in a torn leather coat and wearing a rusty headpiece. He was girt with a great sword about the waist, while in his hand he held a musketoon. He had a gaunt, fierce face, and, by his close-cropped hair and a certain military air, I knew him for one of Oliver's old soldiers.

Before him, with trembling limbs, but bearing himself with quiet dignity, stood a noble old man, bravely apparelled, who held out his hand, as one who argues a point. Between them lay the form of a lackey, the blood running from a wound in the forehead, while another servant stood shaking in the rear.

But that which held my eye and sent the blood surging through every vein was the figure of a girl, who knelt beside the old man and, holding his left hand in both of hers, raised her face to heaven. Never, not even in the galleries of Whitehall, where I had ruffled it for a brief space, had I seen a countenance so lovely. She was robed in a dress of black velvet, with a lace scarf about her throat, and against the dark background her pure face shone in the moonlight, white as ivory. Her large violet eyes were filled with fear, and as I rode among the group, she turned them on me in mute and agonized appeal.

God knows I had little right to feel much righteous wrath at seeing another plying my trade, or reason to feel pity for his victims. Many a time had I stopped a coach and hearkened to tearful supplications, courteously, indeed, but with an unmoved heart. But the sight of that girl kneeling before a cursed, crop-eared rascal, awoke in me so fierce a flame of anger that I did not pause to debate the logic of the matter, but pulled a pistol from the holster and rode at him.

The villain tried a shot at me, but the rain had spoiled the priming of his piece and it did but flash in the pan. He had no time to get to his sword, and so flung himself between Buckskin's legs, and into a little gully which bordered the road and was filled with whins. My own pistol was empty—'twas the one I had fired but a brief while before and neglected to charge again—and I saw that there would be little profit in pursuit, nor indeed was I minded to die by a handful of slugs from the covert of a gorse bush. So back I came on to the road again, and to the group beside the coach.

The girl had risen from her knees, and stood with her arm about the old man's neck and, as I uncovered, gave me so sweet a look of gratitude as stirred my heart. 'Twas long since a pure woman had had cause to look kindly upon me.

"I thank you, sir," the old man said. "You came in the nick of time, else we had surely been robbed, if not worse! That villain would have offered insult to my daughter."

When I heard that, so wroth was I that I lugged out my sword and would have made back into the bushes again, but that the old man stayed me.

"Nay, sir, what boots it?" he said. "He is far away by now. May we not know the name of our deliverer?"

Digitized by Google

"My name is Roger Coverdale, of Gorsham in Derbyshire," I answered. "And I ride—I ride from London to Carlisle." God forgive me, but the lie came trippingly to my tongue. Not for the best horse that ever carried a highwayman by night would I have had that fair girl and that noble old man know the true quality of the man who spake to them.

"'Tis a bitter night to ride abroad," the old man said, "and good inns are few 'twixt here and York. I am Sir Thomas Brinkwell, and this is my daughter Celia. Brinkwell Towers lie but a league away. Will it please you to ride thither with us, Master Coverdale, and rest yourself a few days, if your errand be not pressing?"

How that scene comes back to me now! The great coach, the wet road shining in the moonlight, the two lackeys standing in the background—for the rascal I had seen lying in the road had picked himself up, being more frightened than hurt, and before me the white-haired man and his fair daughter, looking so kindly upon me!

'Twas a sore temptation. No man is so great a villain but he has at times a loathing of his villainies, and so it was with me now. Oh, to be an honest man for a while, and to be so accounted by those with whom I held converse! And yet—— I looked at the girl and hesitated.

"'Tis a cruel night and a bad road, Master Coverdale," she said. "Will you not be persuaded?"

I bowed my head, and so, following the star of a fair woman's face, as many a better man than I has done, I rode to my undoing.

II

FOR many a week I lingered at Brinkwell. Every morning when I rose I swore that day should be the last, and yet, when I saw sweet Celia, I cried to my soul, "Let me have but one more day of Paradise!" and so I tarried. Day after day my love for the girl grew stronger, but, as I am a gentleman, I spake never a word to let her know it. Thief, outcast and all but man-slayer, what thing was I to win the love of a pure maiden? And so my talk was but the base coin of gallantry, which no true woman can mistake for aught else.

Sir Thomas was much among his books, and thus Celia and I were left to each other's company. We rode a-hawking and a-coursing, we walked together in the park, and of an evening we played chess, at which game Celia gave me many a beating, while Sir Thomas was deep in the bowels of some moldy tome.

So it went on, I ever falling deeper and deeper, and she growing ever more gracious, until one morning I took myself, as it were, by the ears.

"Master Roger," I said, "if no one will kick you out, faith, you must e'en do it yourself! Back to your taverns and your dirty trade! Your purse is growing empty, and honest men's meat is not for such as you."

I went and stood by the casement and looked out upon the park, and the flutter of a white robe came nigh to breaking my resolve, but I pulled hard upon the bit, as I was wont to do with Buckskin when he would get out of hand, and went down to the great hall, where sat Sir Thomas in a furred dressing-robe, reading.

"Sir Thomas," I said, and the words all but choked me, "I am come to bid you farewell."

"And right grieved am I to hear it, Master Coverdale," he answered, "but the world calls to young men, and they must obey. This quiet spot is not for a man of thews and brains. Natheless, I would you could have tarried a day longer, for we await the coming of young Adrian Massinger, who is bound to Celia. A gay young spark, who would have been glad of a man's company."

His words took me like a sword-point between the ribs, and I went pale, but I steadied myself with a grip on the back of the oaken settee, and he saw naught of it.

"He is to wed Mistress Brinkwell?"

"Aye, the matter hath been arranged this twelve month. 'Tis a fitting marriage. The estates of his uncle, Peregrine Massinger, march with mine, and as the old man is without issue, Adrian will inherit. The lad has long been Celia's slave, and is a goodly lad withal—overhot i' the head at times, but a good lad. They will wed next Martimas, an' all be well."

I said never a word in reply, for there was a gripping in my throat which was like to throttle me, and I went out into the courtyard, where I bade a helper saddle

Digitized by Google

Buckskin and bring my things from my chamber.

And then I went down the yew alley to the little gate which leads out on the park, to seek Celia.

She was seated on a bench, beneath a giant oak. Her elbow rested on her knee, and her chin, sweetly curved and dimpled, nestled on her hand. So deep was she in thought that she did not hear my step, and I stood and looked down upon her, with a great longing in my heart.

"Mistress Celia," I said, and she started as though I had struck her, "a crown-piece for your thoughts."

"Nay," she answered, blushing divinely, "all the crown-pieces in the world would not buy them," and she moved her dress, that I might sit beside her.

"Heaven grant," I said, "that you may sometimes have a kindly thought for me, after I am gone. Mistress Celia, I am come to bid you farewell."

God knows what it cost me to speak with unconcern, but I did it.

Fool that I was to take her so unawares! But then I did not know. Men are but blind creatures in such matters. For one fleeting moment she looked straight into my eyes, and in that look she bared her whole soul before me, and I knew that she loved me.

I THINK of a man dying of thirst suddenly finding a goblet of cool water to his hand; think of a drowning man, clutching wildly at the empty air, feeling the well-thrown rope fall athwart him, and then—think of me, holding in my grasp that for which I would have bartered my soul's salvation could I have in honor taken it, and yet brushing it aside! Surely at the last it should count somewhat in my favor.

Celia looked away across the park, and began to break a rotten little twig between her fingers.

"Is Brinkwell then so dull, Master Coverdale," she said in a small voice that racked my heart, "that you are in such haste to leave my father and—and me?"

"Nay," I replied, "think not so hardly of me. To one such as I am these days have been like hours of Paradise to a damned soul. And yet—I must away; 'tis duty calls me."

"Duty?" she sighed. "Does duty go before—before everything?"

"Such duty as mine," I answered, "is too plain to be thrust aside."

She made no reply and, as I watched her, I saw a great tear roll down her cheek.

"For the sake of heaven, Mistress Brinkwell, do not weep!" I cried. "I—I have much to bear!"

Do what I would, I could not prevent that break in my voice, and then—her arms were about my neck, and her head on my breast.

"Oh, foolish, foolish Roger!" she cried. "Did you think a woman's eyes were no keener than your own? Have you not told me your love an hundred times? And yet you would have gone forth with never a word of it! Was that fair dealing, Master Roger, to force me to be so unmaidenly? Aye, I am unmaidenly, I know it, but, my heart, I could not let you go!"

"Oh, sweet Celia," I cried in an agony, "unclasp your arms and let me go, as you would a leper! I am not fit to bind your shoe-latchet!"

"You are not already wed?" she asked, half withdrawing from my arms. "Ah, anything but that!"

"Nay," I answered, "I have no tie to any woman."

"Then naught else matters," she made reply, "so you are wholly mine!" And she raised her face to me.

Flesh and blood could resist no longer. What then did it concern that I was an outlaw, with a price upon my head, so that Celia loved me? I caught her in a passionate embrace, and our lips met.

"A fair sight!" said a mocking voice behind us. "On my faith, a fair sight for the eyes of an impatient lover who has worn out two horses that he might greet his promised bride the quicker!"

I turned and saw, standing a few yards away, a tall young man with fair hair, whose features writhed with rage and hate.

"Adrian!" Celia cried, and I knew that her promised husband stood before us.

And worse than that, far worse, before us stood the man upon whom I had loosed pistol three weeks ago and who had torn away my vizard ere he laid me on my back in the road!

"Will you not make me known," he continued, in the same bitter accents, "to the man who aspires to my promised bride?"

He came a pace nearer, and I saw the light of recognition break out on his face.

Digitized by Google

"You!" he cried, with a great oath. "You dog! Do you dare?"

"Cease, Adrian!" my mistress said imperiously. "He did not dare. 'Twas I that dared."

"Faith, madam, you dare too much!" the young man replied. "Do you know who is this pretty fellow, with whom you play the wanton?"

I would have sprung upon him, but that Celia laid her hand upon my arm.

"Aye," she answered proudly. "He is Master Roger Coverdale of Derbyshire, and an honest cavalier."

"Honest?" and Adrian laughed aloud. "God's truth, 'tis a strange kind of honesty that haunts the roads by night and cries 'Stand and deliver!' God save me from such honest men, say I!"

"What mean you?" my love cried angrily.

"Didst ever hear of Captain Curlew, the boldest of highwaymen and the rankest rogue unhung between York and London? Aye, you do well to turn pale, as many a woman has done before at that name. 'Tis he that stands beside you. I give you joy of your fine lover, madam!"

"'Tis false!" my mistress said.

"'Tis true. See how he stands with the right hang-dog look, as if he felt the rope already! Nay, ask him himself, he will not deny it!"

"Roger," and Celia turned to me, "tell him that he lies."

If any man tell you there is no hell, believe him not. There is a hell, and I have passed through it.

"Oh, Roger—speak——" she insisted piteously, and she put her hand beneath my chin and forced my head back until my eyes looked into hers.

"Ah!" she moaned, and she shuddered as she shrank from me. "It is true—God help me!"

"TRUE? S'wounds, 'tis true enough. Look where the rascal clipped a lock with a pistol-ball no more than three weeks ago, before I tore off his mask and flung him from his horse! But for Gray Caesar getting out of hand he had been cooling his heels in York jail, waiting for the hangman!"

"Ah, me!" Celia sighed. She made a tottering step, and Adrian put forth his hand to steady her, but she shrank back.

"Not you!" she said. "Oh, not you!"

To see her thus, so helpless; to know that it was my hand which had dealt the wound, and to be powerless to assuage a single pang—'twas like a dagger in my heart.

"Madam," I said, and I knelt before her on the turf, "hear but a word before you go. 'Twill be the last time you will hear my voice. 'Tis true I am Captain Curlew, as they call me, and meat for the gallows, though there is no man's blood on my soul. When your father bade me to Brinkwell I had done well to ride my way, but—'twas long since I had lived with honest folk, and I was minded to be an honest man for the nonce. 'Twas your fair face, sweet Celia—I may so call you this last time—like that of an angel, which wrought on me. And so I came hither, and so I learned to love you, to my soul's salvation, maybe, but to its torment. But love you as I may, sweet mistress, I would not link your fate with one such as I am, and I would have gone forth with what I deemed my secret unspoken."

A knot of blue ribbon from her breast lay on the grass, and I raised it and pressed it to my lips.

"But one word more, madam," I said. "For me my life is done. There is but one atonement I can make for the past. Hence I ride to York to yield myself. Grant me that I may wear your favor next my heart at the last."

She shivered as I spoke, but she said no word, and moved away with her head low on her bosom. I rose to my feet, and with arms folded, watched her go.

A score of yards away she paused and, turning, looked upon me, and then—then she gave a great cry, and ran back to me and cast herself upon my breast!

"Roger, my Roger!" she cried. "What care I who you be, so you be my own true love? Though you had the blood of twenty men upon your hands, and twenty more to boot, I will not give you up! My love, my love, you will not leave me?"

At the feel of her arms about my neck once more, and the sound of her voice, a very rage of love and joy filled my veins.

"'Fore God, mistress," I said, "I will not leave you though every fiend in hell strove to drag us apart!"

"What, madam?" Adrian cried, in a

Digitized by Google

transport of fury. "Would you fondle the man who but a short while ago sought to slay your promised husband?"

"Would to God his aim had been truer!" she answered, facing round on him. "You marplot!"

Adrian stepped back a pace, so great was her rage, and even I was amazed that a creature so gentle should speak such words.

"You wanton——" he said with a sneer.

"Hearken, mistress," I said, "Buckskin stands saddled in the courtyard. I will slay this man—he owes me a life for the words he has spoken, and 'twill be in fair fight—and then you shall mount behind me and we will ride to the coast and there take ship for France, where I have friends who will help me to become an honest man again."

What she would have answered I know not, for Adrian, crying "Never! An I can not have her, you shall not!" snatched a pistol from beneath his cloak and fired.

As he did so my love threw herself on my bosom, and I felt the shock of the ball as it struck her. Her arms hung heavy on my shoulders and, as she raised her glorious eyes to mine, I saw the glaze of death upon them.

"Kiss me—Roger," she sighed. "Kiss me, for I am sped! But I die in your arms and I am content."

She sighed a little sigh again, as I pressed her lips, and spake no more, and as I laid her gently on the turf her sweet spirit passed.

LIKE a man in a dream I unbuckled my cloak and spread it upon her. I kissed her once upon the brow, and her heart was not more cold than mine as I turned to Adrian, who stood by, pale and trembling.

"Master Massinger," I said, "'tis possible that both I and she that lies there should give you thanks for what you have done this day, though 'twas not meant in kindness."

"You villain!" he answered. "'Twas meant for you!"

"Aye," I said, "it boots little for whom, now that it is done, but methinks there is still a matter of debate between us."

"What mean you?" he asked.

I touched the hilt of my sword. "An it please you," I said, "we will even try which is the better man." I spoke with a cold and smooth voice, as though we had fallen out over some trumpery difference.

"I fight only with gentlemen!" he made answer, and I could see he had no stomach for the cold steel.

"Master Massinger," I said, "my lineage is older and purer than thine, but since it seems your courage needs a spur, I must e'en apply it," and I smote him lightly on the lips.

At that the devil in him awoke, and, snatching out his sword, he ran upon me.

He was a pretty enough swordsman, but no match for me, who had been trained in more than one school of fence, and we had not exchanged a dozen passes before I knew that his life was mine.

"Why do you not end it?" he cried at last, when I had pricked him lightly a half score of times. The sweat stood on his forehead, and the fear of death was in his eyes.

"I am minded that you shall drink the cup to the dregs, as I must do!" I answered.

"End it when you will!" he said, for he was a brave man. "None shall say that Adrian Massinger died a coward!" And he made so fierce an attack that he came nigh to wounding me.

"I will end it now!" I made answer, and drove my blade home.

I laid him by the side of my dead love—they were a goodly pair to look upon—and then I went back, by way of the little gate and the yew alley, to the courtyard, where Buckskin neighed as he heard my step.

"Did you haply meet Master Massinger?" the house steward asked of me as I put foot in stirrup. "His lackey arrived a while back and said his master had taken the shorter way through the park."

"I met him," I replied shortly. "He is yet in the park."

"With Mistress Celia, doubtless," the steward said, with a grin.

"Aye," I answered, "he is with Mistress Celia." And I turned rein and rode away, by highways and byways well known to me, and so into York, to the house of a justice, where I yielded myself.

To-morrow I am to suffer.

There are four other men to suffer with me, and at times I hear them crying out, but I neither cry out nor care, for my heart is too cold.

Digitized by Google

THE MASTER

by George Buchanan Fife

THE master of the *Southern Cross* had a bad name. His ill-repute had spread to every port on the West Coast. He was known, and coupled with an oath, from the strewn wharves of Penkan southward to the weedy mooring-buoys of Osafi, and these two lie twenty-one fair days apart. And his bad name was his ship's bad name, and both had been made fast before ever they came to the Coast together.

A slatternly tramp in the boru trade was the first to bring the tale to the Coast. She gave it to the health-officer and the harbor master at Quimra and after they had wagged their heads over it awhile it had flowed, red and glistening, along the water-streets and into convenient bars and forecastles, whence it emerged redder than ever, for such is the way of the Coast. Thus had it gone from mouth to ear unto the fourth version, which is always the damning version, so by the time the *Southern Cross* and her skipper came slowly and quietly into the harbor of Penkan in the sunny stillness of a June morning their names were already a bloody smear in the annals of the port.

The master of the *Southern Cross* was John Harker, blue-eyed, smooth-shaven, well-set-up and on the windward side of fifty. Coming of a family of sailor-folk, he possessed unwavering views as to the discipline which should prevail upon a merchantman and the authority of her skipper to enforce it. And he did enforce it with courage and justice and the strength of his hands, but it cost him his good name.

Although a quiet, helpful man in any stress of work or weather, the first manifestation of unrest or unwillingness among his men provoked from John Harker a punishment so swift, so vivid that it lived with the crew for weeks. Only twice, in his nine years of command, had he faced grave trouble. It happened when he had the *Matthew Walker*, schooner, carrying marble from the Tobikoru quarries. One day a sailor, just out of irons, wheeled and struck him with a knife and the skipper beat him to death before the eyes of the crew. Another day, a month later, in Creagur Roads,

Digitized by Google

as the men were going noisily overside with their dunnage at nightfall, some one took a parting pot-shot at him from the shelter of the galley. The bullet missed, so Harker ran forward, caught the man with the revolver still in his hand and broke his back over the rail.

For these two affairs he had had to make answer ashore, but the answers had sufficed and he had returned to his cabin as he left it, regretful but unashamed. The first time, as he blotted his acquittal in the log, he had said to his chief officer, "That was a very bad business, Mr. Roberts. I hope we have no more of it." The second time he had made no comment whatever. But within six weeks he sold his share in the *Walker* and went to Prince Royal, where he put every penny he owned into the *Southern Cross*, then lying under repairs at Victoria Wharf, whither she had limped out of a hurricane.

As soon as she was shipshape he sailed for the Bradwells and knocked about the islands for half a year in unprofitable adventurings. Then had come his swift determination to quest the West Coast for trade, and in due season, their contracts closed or sold, Harker and the *Southern Cross* stood away from Tranaltu on a hopeful afternoon bound for Penkan and what its region had to offer.

In the new waters there was much to be picked up by a fast and steadfast schooner. For the southward run from Penkan there were cargoes of takra to be carried, a delicious irony in the case of a vessel in bad odor, because there is no sweeter, cleaner, more fragrant cargo in the world.

At Osafi, where the spicy bales were whipped out and lightered ashore, the still redolent holds of the coasting craft were stowed with machinery and high explosives, for the Colonial Government was variously busy with railroads and bridges and portworks at Ulgroda, and there were many mines in the gray-green ridges behind Mostombi and Lakhir. These northbound cargoes were much of a solace and a compensation to a ship's bad friends ashore. They joyously foresaw that she might blow up some day and settle everything, old scores included, in splinters on the sea.

But rates were commensurate with risks and John Harker did not sail the *Southern Cross* in blindly. It was fated that he and the West Coast should engage on equal terms. The character of this rough and wayward region, which jostled the law with every swagger, had long ago been brought to his cabin by visiting skippers in terms of adroitly profane denunciation. Able-bodied seamen were to be found there in plenty, but they were a hairy, heavy-fisted company, drunken and rebellious and generally unwilling to account for their presence on the Coast. Now and then the Colonial Government, pausing a while in its railroad building, hanged two or three of them. Otherwise they and their activities flourished. They were ready to sign aboard anything that floated, but they held skippers and mates in a blasphemous, unruly contempt.

WHAT the West Coast knew of John Harker had been brought in by the rusty boru tramp. She shambled into Quimra one morning, and, for lack of other news, told the quarantine officer and the harbor master that the *Southern Cross*, schooner, John Harker master, was on her way up from the Bradwells. Thus far the information was of slight interest, but the tramp pieced it out with the two tragedies on the *Matthew Walker* and from that moment Harker and the *Southern Cross* were marked.

The tramp was five days out of Penkan when the schooner ran in, so by that time the tale was old there and much embellished by what had come up from Quimra in other forecastles. There was, however, little need for this embellishment, for among the longshoremen at Penkan was a man who had sailed under Harker in the *Matthew Walker* and was looking on the day he beat Tom White to death. This man himself had run afoul of the skipper and been in irons twice on the schooner, so he was able to add brilliantly to Harker's already bad eminence in the port.

"I know 'im; all about 'im," he told them in Charlie Tulip's bar. "Didn't I see 'im kill Tom White? Sure I did! Wasn't I standin' right here at the fore hatch?" He drew a plan with a finger dipped in the spilled beer. "I seen 'im and White talkin' over here. He was madder'n ——, too. Tom White wasn't sayin' a word, jus' had his hands hangin' down like this. An' nex' thing I seen was 'im hit White an' both of 'em go down together. He must 'a' had knuckles on, for Tom never moved after he hit 'im an' he went on beatin' 'im all over the deck, and when he got up they tried to get Tom on his feet an' he was dead. He'd

Digitized by Google

oughter swung for that, all right, but the two mates was there an' them two an' Harker fixed it up about a knife an' there wasn't a —— thing done about it, not one —— thing!

"He killed another man after that, a big Dutchman; but I wasn't in her then. He shot 'im in his bunk an' got away with it—jus' plain murdered 'im. Know 'im? Sure I do, an' you'll know 'im, too. Say, listen to me, he'll kill some o' you people yet, if you ship with 'im. He don't give a —— for nobody. If he'd ever tried to put it over me I'd fixed 'im—but somebody'll get 'im yet. You see. He'll try it on this here ship like he done of the *Walker*, an' then he'll go after Tom White and Dutchy."

While the *Southern Cross* was in dry dock at Penkan, Harker spent nearly a week along the water-front to note the sort of sailormen he must ship. He had had all he wanted of native crews in the island trade he was leaving and now he sought men of his own kind and color in this hazard of new fortunes. Remembering what he had heard he was not surprised at the ill-favored, powerful lot of sailormen he came upon loitering about the agencies and boarding-houses. But he preferred rough men; they were the best for rough work; besides they were the only kind he had ever known. His crews had never been distinguished for mildness nor morals. Harker held it to be no affair of his that a man had slit throats or purses in his wayfaring; all he asked of that man, once aboard his ship, was efficiency and alert, unquestioning obedience. Anything less was attended to with impressive promptness. Harker himself shouldered that.

When the *Southern Cross* was afloat again and Harker was ready to sign a crew, the tale from Charlie Tulip's bar had reached its fourth version and in this form Harker came face to face with it in the Consul's office. Squaring both his jaw and his shoulders he replied:

"It's true, in a way, yes. I did have trouble with the men—and you can't put down trouble with a feather duster. They tried to run the ship and, when I wouldn't let them, they tried to kill me. That was all." After a long pause he added, "The court cleared me."

The last sentence was uttered with such directness of voice and gaze that the clerk snapped shut like a watch-case and Harker missed much he might have learned about himself and the blood upon his hands. However, he had heard enough to be assured of what the Coast thought and, incidentally, of what it expected of him.

Neither concerned him greatly. Such regret as he felt over his undesirable prominence was balanced by his conviction that it would serve, at least, to encourage obedience and order upon the *Southern Cross*. He had brought his ship to the West Coast short-handed with the intention of signing as many men as he needed to work her handily. He had known from the first what sort they would be and if they were now to look upon him as a murdering bully he foresaw a peacefulness aboard far different from his previous anticipation.

The West Coast is accustomed to doing things in its own strange way and it was thus that it dealt with Harker and the *Southern Cross*. While it regarded them both with extreme disfavor—and this is singular enough, for red skippers have had its history dripping for years—it denied them neither crew nor cargo.

More than one shipper voiced the hope—in a roundabout sort of way—that he would have no trouble. And Harker's invariable reply had been, "No, sir, none of my making." He meant just that. He had never been a trouble-seeker, but he recognized that warm waters make warm blood and that small things often expand to portentous size under a tropic sun. It had been his misfortune to have been present upon two occasions when these facts were demonstrated.

The morning after the *Southern Cross* was floated out of dock and towed to the Lower Wharf, the new crew came aboard—nine big, heavy-shouldered men. Captain Harker, his hands in his pockets, leaned against the rail to watch their arrival. While they were stowing their dunnage he called the first officer aft.

"Well, what do you make of them, Mr. Weston?" he asked.

"Strong-looking lot, sir. Haven't been ashore long, I understand. There's two Americans among 'em and three Englishmen and two Norwegians and a couple of Dutchmen."

"Americans, eh? Off some China ship out of 'Frisco, I guess; that's where most of 'em come from. Well, get 'em to work, Mr. Weston. We'll go out early Thursday afternoon. One o'clock's high water."

Digitized by Google

II

IT WAS scarcely an hour before sailing time when Captain Harker finished the last bit of business ashore and hurried down to his ship. As he came out of the long pier-shed and halted for an instant's comprehensive glance aloft, one of the sweating stevedores, his work at an end, was sitting on an iron bitt a dozen feet away, bawling his impious conversation to two of the *Southern Cross* men who hung over the side.

"All I got to say is this, watch out f'r Bloody-Fist," he was calling, one hand hollowed about his mouth. "He'll murder a man for lookin' crooked at 'im. He's killed two a'ready and somebody's got to be next."

Any reply that either of the two might have made was never uttered. One of them suddenly caught sight of the skipper in the doorway. He nudged his companion and both moved quickly from the rail. They must have given some hasty signal to the stevedore, for he, too, turned and saw Captain Harker. The latter spoke no word, but kept his gaze upon the two sailors until they edged out of range. Then he went slowly aboard. The stevedore, with a loud laugh, drew off his cap, wiped his face in it and slid from the bitt.

As soon as Captain Harker reached the deck he went forward, where the men were at work, to search for the faces he had just marked. He spoke to no one until he had looked straight in every pair of eyes, and then he called the first officer aside.

"Mr. Weston," he said quietly, "who are those two men—the one in the yellow shirt standing by the hatchway and the other one, there at the foremast, with his back to us?"

"That's Ridley and—and Henderson, sir—no it's Fenn; Ridley and Fenn. It's Ridley in the yellow shirt. They're the two Americans."

The first officer waited in expectation of some word or command, something to explain the inquiry, but Captain Harker merely looked about the deck a moment and then walked aft.

"Cast off as soon as you can, Mr. Weston," he called over his shoulder, his watch in his hand. "It's close upon one o'clock now."

Weston had been second mate with Harker on the *Matthew Walker* and that evening when the *Southern Cross* had picked up Split Shoal Light and was rounding her way into the steady southeast breeze the skipper summoned him to his cabin and related the incident of the stevedore.

"So, it's 'Bloody-Fist' is it?" he said, with a hard smile. "I'm sorry about that, Mr. Weston. I know, and so do you, that there's been a lot of talk about this *Walker* business, and it hasn't done anybody any good. But if there's going to be trouble on this ship—I mean anything like that other—I'll do the same thing over again." By way of emphasis Harker laid his clenched hand upon the table. "Mind you," he continued after a moment, "I don't look for any trouble, but you know the kind of men that ship out of these ports and there can't be any kid-glove business about making them do what they're told to do. But they're to be treated—remember this—fair and square in everything." He spoke very slowly. "There's to be no unnecessary rough handling. I don't care what they say about me so long as I do what I believe's right and proper. My fist may be bloody, but I don't think it's dirty."

He paused a moment, staring at the table. "I was half minded to give up the sea when I let Swenson take my share in the *Walker*," he continued, "but I couldn't do it. It looked as if I was running away. And the *Walker* would have had a bad name as long as I stayed in her, and that wasn't square to Swenson. He was too old to sail her himself, so I got out."

Captain Harker carefully relighted his cigar and arose. Weston reached for his cap and arose also. "I understand, sir," he said, in general reply.

"Just a word more, Mr. Weston," the skipper added, as the first officer laid his hand upon the doorknob. "I know that I've given this ship a bad name, too. But she's a clean ship: she's been clean ever since I've had her, and I intend that she shall stay clean. That's clear, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Good night."

This was the way in which the *Southern Cross* began her first West Coast voyage. The men in the forecastle had heard all about Captain Harker before they signed, but the stevedore's words, repeated at the first opportunity, crowned everything in supplying the needed and much relished nickname "Bloody-Fist" had been intended by the stevedore to express a bodily menace, but in this light it failed completely.

Digitized by Google

Not one man had come aboard the *Southern Cross* with the least fear of Captain Harker in his heart. All the nickname really accomplished was to crystallize the challenge of the skipper's authority. Very soon it came to glint with derision as it was passed about.

THE fourth day out, as the middle watch was turning in, Fenn, the American, whom the first officer had intentionally separated from Ridley in the watches, propped himself on one elbow in his bunk and called quietly to Garrow, who was yawning at the dim, swaying light, one boot in his hand.

"Say, English, look here." As Garrow leaned toward him he asked in a half-whisper: "What d'you think of him?" squinting one eye and jerking a thumb toward the door.

"Who, the mate?" Garrow asked, without much interest.

"Naw, old Bloody-Fist. He don't look a —— of a lot good to me. I've been watchin' him the last couple o' days and I can't see him beatin' up nobody in *this* ship, not in a million years!"

Garrow stared at his heavy boot until it became a weapon in his hand. "Who says as 'ow he's to give any of us a beatin', eh?" he demanded truculently. His sudden vehemence attracted two other sailors, who edged into the discussion with inquiries as to what it was all about. Garrow ignored them and turned abruptly upon Fenn. "The trouble's this, matey," he said. "Old Bloody-Fist 'as got every man jack of you scared. Aye, but 'e 'as, I say! 'E comes aboard this 'ere ship with two ghosts be'ind 'im, backin' 'im up like, an' you're wonderin' who'll be the third, an' fearin' all the time it'll be yerself. Yah!" He flung the boot to the deck in violent disgust. "To —— with 'im!"

"You don't think I'm afraid of 'im, do you?" Fenn demanded, quick to resent the implication.

"I ain't sayin' who's afraid an' who ain't," Garrow replied, crumpling his hard hand into a formidable knot, "but I'll say this: if 'e tries any o' that aboard 'ere, it'll be the fust mate what takes the ship to port. 'E's killed two, 'as 'e? Aye, but there's some 'ere as is just waitin' for 'im to lift 'is 'and! We'll show 'im as 'ow 'e carn't come to this coast——"

An unexpected sound behind Garrow swung him about on his heel and there stood Mr. Weston. The first officer remained silent a moment, looking searchingly at the motionless group. Then he said, slowly, "I want you men to knock off this talking and turn in!" and as they moved away he stepped forward, turned down the swinging light and, without another word, left the forecastle.

The next morning he related the incident to Captain Harker. The skipper's face set hard as he listened. "I see, I see," he said, nodding his head. They won't let it rest. It's a pity, Mr. Weston, a great pity."

For some time he sat silent, his chin in his hand, staring out of the small square window where the sea was tumbling past. Then he arose and pulled his jacket about him and buttoned it carefully. "Mr. Weston," he said, "go call the men aft, if everything's snug. I'd like a word with 'em."

The men came aft, straggling and deliberate. Captain Harker waited until they stopped jostling and nudging and were quiet and then he took his hands out of his pockets and advanced to within a yard of them. They did not once take their eyes from his calm face. He briefly but steadfastly returned the scrutiny, letting his gaze pass from man to man throughout the group.

"Now, my men," he said at last, "I want only a few words with you, but I want you to understand them, and me, too. I'm going to talk to you in a way captains don't usually talk to their men." One or two of the men in front shifted on their feet and the line swayed. "You've come aboard this ship with a wrong idea and some of you are trying to make trouble with it. I know all about that, and I want it to stop right here. There's not going to be any trouble on this ship unless you start it. That's all. Now, go forward."

There was an instant of hesitation and then the men moved slowly away. Garrow, who had been in the second line, stood a bit longer than the rest and as he turned he flung into the ear of the man nearest him an ugly, arch-contemptuous word which is not to be found in the dictionary.

Captain Harker heard it. He sprang forward, caught Garrow by the arm, whirling him about, and drove his right fist crashing into the man's face. Garrow quivered to his heels and, with wide, blank eyes, fell heavily to the deck and lay still, face downward.

Digitized by Google

At the sudden scuffle and the hard fall the men swung about, pushing one another aside for a clearer view. Some stared at the skipper, who confronted them, breathing hard, one hand thrust into his coat-pocket; others stared at the disordered figure at his feet. The shock of surprise held them fast for a moment. Then Fenn, into whose ear Garrow had hissed the indecency, and Ridley and one or two others who were standing together, made an uncertain, uneasy movement forward.

As if he had been expecting something of this sort Captain Harker took one swift step directly toward them and his hand flew from his pocket with a long blue revolver in it. The shadow of sudden death fluttered across the sunny deck.

The first officer, with a pin snatched from the nearest rack, started forward beside Harker, but the skipper thrust him back. "Never mind, Mr. Weston!" he cried. "I can do this!"

Fenn and the others stopped instantly where they were, their mouths wide open. Captain Harker halted, too, and there was silence in the ship save for the noise of the wind and the sea and once the creak of the wheel as the helmsman drew it toward him. Not another soul moved. Captain Harker did not raise his revolver; he held it easily before him, its heavy barrel resting in his other hand. All the menace of the weapon was alive in his attitude.

And thus he faced them, without a word, while the shadow fluttered above the rigid group. When he had become quite cool and the tension of the men had so relaxed that they could stand naturally upon their feet, Captain Harker returned the pistol slowly to his pocket.

"Have you had enough?" he asked, in a quiet, even voice which there was no answering. "Very well, now get forward. Two of you—you and—you," he indicated Fenn and Ridley and then Garrow, who had rolled upon his back in a dizzy, crawling effort to rise, "take this man with you. That's all now, Mr. Weston, thank you."

III

THUS it was that "Bloody-Fist" became a reality to the men of the *Southern Cross*, and a murderous bitterness arose within them. There was no more talking in the forecastle, but the men came together by twos and threes during the night watches where the forward rail was shadowy and they could keep a sharp eye out for the mates. They talked it over quietly and dangerously and, under Garrow's influence, tragedy brewed abroad. He was frankly outspoken in his determination upon revenge. He told them that he intended to kill John Harker as soon as the proper opportunity arrived.

"'E's begun it an', b' ——, I'll end it—forever!" he announced, striking himself upon the chest. "I'll square the two men of the *Matthew Walker* an' myself at the same time! I knew 'im when I signed, an' now 'e'll know me. I don't ask no 'elp, 'cause I'll take 'im when there ain't no chance for 'im drawin' a gun. Ain't I right? Didn't 'e come 'ere with blood on 'is 'ands, ready to knock 'is men about for nothin' at all?" The two Americans, one of whom had sneaked on deck while his watch was turned in, nodded in agreement. "Well, I'll show 'im what for. 'E'll never knock any more about. 'E's no cap'n, 'e's a murderer, that's what 'e is, an' 'e ain't fit to live! An' I'm goin' to kill 'im afore I leave the ship!"

A night or two of this sort of talk gave Garrow a leadership in the night-watch councils which the men readily accorded but, in measure, envied. They conceded his right to even the score in any way he chose, but they did not see why all of them should not have a hand in it. Captain Harker's act and his readiness to uphold it with a revolver was, they declared, a challenge to the entire crew, not merely an attack upon one shipmate, and it was for all of them to strike back. It would be easier and much more certain for half a dozen of them to do away with him than for one man to undertake it. He would be on his guard against Garrow, knowing that kind of man and the measure of his hatred, but it was scarcely likely he would expect concerted retaliation by the entire crew.

So it was decided that the killing of John Harker should be a crew matter, any man to get him who could. Garrow, as leader, warned them against failure and against any plan that might involve failure. There was to be no dropping of blocks or marlinspikes from aloft, he ordered, because these often missed, and an open attack was out of the question, as the skipper was likely to be armed. It must be accomplished at night

Digitized by Google

and in a moment so well chosen that there should be no unfavorable witnesses.

When the night was cloudy and his vessel was running into a bit of a blow, it was Captain Harker's habit to come up at the beginning of the middle watch and take a turn about the decks. Sometimes he talked a few moments with the watch officer, but often he walked the length of the vessel in silence, nodded a "good-night" and turned in again. Garrow and the others knew this, so it was decided that upon such a night, as Harker reached the fore-hatch, one of the men should creep up behind him, knock him on the head and then, with promptly rendered assistance, throw him into the sea.

The device was not a new one—minus the blow, it was as old as Jonah—but the crew was primitive in such matters and, if the thing were well done there could be no positive evidence, whatever the suspicion, that the skipper had not fallen over. The watch might even cry "Man overboard!" and work like mad to bring the schooner about, but it would be the last of John Harker.

So, with this well-considered plan in their hearts, the men went about their tasks aboard the *Southern Cross* and she made her way down the Coast, from sunshine to sunshine, through a kindly sea. And more than one of the seamen was sensible of an acute fascination in watching the skipper as he moved about the ship or read and smoked under the small square of awning he had had rigged up for himself beside the rail. There was an indescribable attraction in gazing at this strong, silent man who had so short a time to live, who was to be passed out so swiftly, so helplessly, from the midst of life into the black turmoil of the sea. It was as if he were already dead and this were a tangible ghost which commanded and which, for the sake of peace, must be obeyed just a little while longer. Some of the men even saw humor in it and they laughed to themselves or winked guardedly at their watchmates as the skipper passed.

Now, of all this John Harker had no inkling. To analyze the sentiment of his crew after a disciplinary episode never occurred to him. Once the discipline was inflicted and his authority established and recognized, the incident was, to him, closed. He thought no more about it unless, perhaps, it was the unlikelihood of its recurrence. This came of his faith not only in himself, but in sailormen as a class.

To be sure, he had encountered two distinctly bad examples, but these he had eliminated, and without prejudice to the remainder. Some might still behave thoughtlessly, but these could be dealt with easily and effectively, as in the recent case aboard the *Southern Cross*. Garrow had merely been a temporarily bad judge of himself and his captain, that was all, and now the whole matter had been adjusted and was at an end. The only thought in Harker's mind was to take his schooner into her first port of call on time. Thus Garrow and his friends were secure in their plotting, and hour after hour, like wolves, they watched the skipper and waited for the dark night to drag him down.

But his star was watching over John Harker as the *Southern Cross* fared down the coast. Night came and went and the wolves watched in hot impatience, but their quarry never came near enough. Again and again the skipper paced the deck in the darkness, but never once did he go foward where hate and an armed hand awaited him in the shadows.

SO, IN HER own good time, with all hands safe, the schooner made Ulgroda. She ran in at dawn, delivered her lesser cargo of traders' merchandise and slipped out again just before sunset, bound for Osafi with the takra bales. And the same star that had borne the skipper company to Ulgroda went with him to Osafi. Had he been fully aware of the conspiracy to kill him he could not have given Garrow and his followers less opportunity to attack him. Never for one instant did they fail in their vigilance, but something always served to keep the skipper out of their reach. And during the last three nights a clear sky and a full moon were there to aid the star, so John Harker lived to see the *Southern Cross* made fast to Buoy No. 8 in the harbor of Osafi and to report to the health officer that he had brought no fever down from Penkan.

But he brought the hatred of the men with him in terrible measure. They had seen the dark watches go by, one after another, without the red fulfilment, and they had cursed the daylight in their impatience. Now had all their plotting come to nothing because here was Osafi and here was the skipper already arranging with the lightermen for breaking out the takra.

For a moment Garrow almost lost his grip

Digitized by Google

upon the men. They flung the skipper's blow back in his face and with it his blasphemous threats of revenge. They asked him why, if the darkness had offered no moment, he had not made the chance to square himself, even if it were in broad daylight, when he knew he had half a dozen men back of him. It was not that they thought him afraid, only that in their defeat they cast about for anything to account for it. Garrow met them with quick wit.

"What if we are 'ere at Osafi, 'e ain't got away yet, 'as 'e?" he demanded. "I ain't 'ad a chance at 'im yet. An' ain't it better for us all that we're 'ere an' 'im too? I'll get 'im 'ere at Osafi, when we're all ashore; then there won't be no mutiny about it, as would be like enough to get us all into trouble. It'll be easy to come alongside 'im in the dark ashore an' then who's to see or know, tell me that? They'll think some o' the natives done for 'im—*'e* won't never know who done it!"

This was satisfying, in a way, although some of the men shrugged their shoulders over it. They much preferred the idea of killing the skipper on his own deck where they might have more or less of a hand in it. But Garrow pointed out the risk they ran in doing anything of the kind in such a harbor, where many ships were riding and small boats were always busy between the wharves and the anchorage. Whereas, after nightfall, the narrow rambling streets of the port, lighted only at long intervals back of the water-front, would well afford the desired opportunity if Captain Harker could be followed unobserved when he went ashore.

Garrow had lost none of his determination upon revenge and he asked Ridley and Fenn whether they did not want to go with him when he went for the night's work. He'd show them, he said, with a familiar gesture. They were more than willing to see the thing out, and so were some of the others, but Garrow held that too many might spoil it all, so only one other was added to the party, Liebermann, one of the Germans—as a sort of memorial honor to "Dutchy."

The Americans had signed only for the run to Osafi, so they could leave the schooner as soon as the cargo was out of her, and it was far from likely that Harker would spend an evening ashore until the last bale was overside. Garrow and Liebermann were to get liberty the day they knew the skipper was going into the town for the night, pick up the Americans at Pedro's and then watch for Harker's arrival at Prince's Upper Wharf. After that it would be simply a matter of patience and the darkness.

But it did not come about in just this way. At the end of the second day of the *Southern Cross's* unloading, when the men had knocked off and were amusing themselves throwing bits of takra bark and verbal pleasantries at the native longshoremen while the R. and D. towing-boat drew the last lighter away, Captain Harker heard a smothered word and a laugh close behind him as he turned aft from the forward rail. Something within him swung him about instantly. He saw Garrow and the two Americans and another of the crew standing together and he caught their eyes as he wheeled. Garrow and the two Americans he knew; of the other he demanded his name and, when it had been given, he turned aft again with scarcely a moment's pause.

The next morning these four men were called on deck by Mr. Weston, paid off and ordered from the ship. There was no explanation; they were simply told to get their dunnage together at once and go ashore. Captain Harker, his hands in his pockets, stood by as they went down the ladder to the shore boat and were rowed away.

The schooner's arrival at Osafi would have been all sufficient to break out the old stories about her skipper, but when four of her men were set upon the beach in this fashion with an entirely new tale to relate in the bars of the seamen's hostelries, John Harker became a mark for every sea-roughened hand in the town.

For two days Garrow and the three, now doubly bent upon revenge, watched for him and their opportunity, but when it chanced that he came ashore he always went off to the schooner before dusk and they were left to damn him in their glasses at Pedro's. But in the evening of the third day one of the men of the *Southern Cross*, Whitely, who had been in Garrow's watch, ran in upon them with the news that "Bloody-Fist" was going up the Yadur the next morning in the R. and D. freight boat, to see about shipments or something, he was not sure what, for the new turbine-power plant at Erdalin. He had heard the skipper talking to the first mate about it. This meant a forty-mile journey up a wild, narrow river, hung to its edges with rank and rotting vegetation, and past many villages of na-

Digitized by Google

tives none too friendly to the white man who was so assiduously invading their immemorial domain.

The news did not confound Garrow for a moment; he struck one hairy hand into the other and declared that "Bloody-Fist" himself was providing the opportunity. All they had to do, he explained, was to go with him. "'E's got to come back, ain't 'e?" he asked, and as the others waited, he added, "Well, we'll get 'im on the run down. It'll be night, too. It couldn't be better, what? 'E's ruined us in this port, and 'ere's where he pays!"

The amount of drink with which the four had fired themselves since their dismissal from the schooner was largely responsible for this elaboration of the plot. It would have been much easier to await Harker's return from the up-river country, but Garrow was impatient, protesting that the skipper had already taken up too much of their time and the business should be ended now without any further waiting. It would be easy enough to go in the freight-boat, which carried passengers second-class at two *ruhks* ten the round journey, scarcely more than the price of the drinks on the table before them. So, in the end, Garrow prevailed, and it was decided to kill Captain Harker on his way down from Erdalin.

IV

When Harker went aboard the little cargo steamer next morning, Garrow and the three were already there awaiting him. They were in the second-class section of the forward deck, a low rail separating them from the chattering crowd of blacks squatting in the bows. Piles of boxes and bales afforded them excellent opportunity for keeping inconspicuously out of sight, and as Harker, who was accompanied by one of the Company superintendents, went aft as soon as he stepped aboard and sought out a bamboo chair under the awning, he saw nothing of the four men during the up-river run.

At four o'clock that afternoon, his business transacted, Harker returned to the steamer and within a short time she began her slow journey down the river to Osafi. And Garrow and his mates were there, as before, save that the flask he had taken with him had been emptied and flung overside.

When the dusk came down, as it does quickly in that region, and the steamer's searchlight had been turned on to show her the winding way down the narrow river, Garrow got upon his feet and announced that he was going aft "to 'ave a look about." Fenn wanted to go with him, but Garrow told him to remain behind, saying it was best for one of them to find the skipper and that he'd be back as soon as he found him. So the sailor sneaked aft, dodging carefully past the lighted doorways, and far in the stern he spied Harker, stretched at length in a low wide chair.

His hands were locked behind his head. A few feet away the R. and D. superintendent was writing in a pocket-book. Garrow, in the shadow of the deckhouse watched him for several minutes, asking himself whether he had not better do the thing now. He had a revolver in his pocket and his hand sought it as he stared. Harker was not more than ten feet from him and he could easily have killed the skipper with a single shot.

But he waited too long. One of the steamer's officers, coming out of the lighted saloon into the darkness of the deck, stumbled blindly into him from behind. An involuntary oath came to Garrow's lips and cut short the officer's quick apology. He grasped the sailor by the shoulder and swung him sharply around to bring his face into the yellow glow of a window.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" he demanded.

Garrow made no reply, but tried to edge away from the light.

"Don't you know you have no business here? Your place is up forward; now go there! Don't let me find you aft here again!"

To emphasize the command he pushed Garrow roughly in the indicated direction and stood to watch him go. The sailor lurched heavily against the deck-house, hesitated a moment, and then went unsteadily forward.

The altercation had attracted the attention of both Captain Harker and the R. and D. superintendent, but neither had caught sight of Garrow's face in the light. As they settled back in their chairs the superintendent said, "We have a hard time now and then with the natives on these boats, they'd steal the ——"

The deck officer heard him as he passed

Digitized by Google

and stopped a moment. "That wasn't one of the blacks," he said. "It was a white man. Ugly looking and a bit drunk, I think. He and one or two others up forward have been doing a lot of loud talking all the way down."

"Well, we have troubles with the white ones sometimes," Captain Harker admitted as he lighted another cigar.

"We don't stand much of it on these boats," the officer replied. "We don't dare to after some of the things that have happened," and with a salute of good-night he walked away.

As the night was hot, such breeze as stirred blowing down-river with them, Harker and his companion of the Company sat long in silence. Finally the superintendent arose, cursed the heat and the country in general and said he was going inside to amplify some of the day's notes he had made before he forgot all they signified. Harker pleaded his allegiance to a good cigar and said he would remain exactly where he was. "I'd die inside, I know, so I'll try to keep alive out here," he added. So the superintendent stretched himself wearily and left him.

In the lazy comfort of his low bamboo chair, Captain Harker smoked and dozed awhile in the river silence. Then he dropped fast asleep, his cigar tumbling from his relaxing fingers.

WHEN he awakened—and he never knew what it was that aroused him, but he was alive and alert on the instant—he saw four figures coming down the deck toward him. The foremost two he recognized at once, as they were Garrow and Fenn. The other two were shadows in the background. He sprang from his chair and faced them.

"Well, Garrow, what is it? And you, Fenn! What do you want?"

"You know —— well what I want, you murderin' bully!" Out came the sailor's revolver. Fenn cast a roving, anxious eye into the darkness behind him and said "*Sh-h-h!*"

"Then why don't you take it? You're four to one. And you've got that." Harker pointed to the pistol. He was standing as straight as a young tree, every muscle rigid with expectancy.

Garrow moved closer to him and a little in advance of the others. Harker saw the sailor's weapon glint in the light and for an instant it almost drew his gaze from the man's face. It glinted again as it rose in Garrow's big hand. And then suddenly from around the corner of the house back of them came the deck officer.

The four men turned at his footsteps and he, too, recognized Garrow. He sprang into the group at once.

"What are you doing here again? I told you, and now, by ——!" He stepped back and his arm crooked for the blow, but Harker flung himself between them, catching Garrow's hand that held the revolver and calling to him quickly, with his head aside, "Put that away!" Then to the officer, "Don't strike him! Wait a minute! I'll tell you!"

The four sailors stood stock-still in amazement. The officer, forcing down the arm Harker had thrown across his breast, cried out to them, "What do you mean by coming aft when I ordered you not to? You'll go in irons for this!" Then he remembered Harker. "Do you know these men?"

"Yes, I do," was the reply. "They came aft to see me, I think. This man," he nodded toward Garrow, "imagines he has a grievance against me. He sailed with me once, all four of them did, and, well, we were talking it over when—when you came. I didn't know they were aboard until just now. They woke me up. My name is John Harker, and I'm master of the schooner *Southern Cross*, running between Osafi and Penkan. You can find out who I am from the R. and D. superintendent aboard here."

Garrow grumbled something as Harker paused and the skipper turned and said to him very quietly, "I think you'd better let me do the talking for you, Garrow."

It was at this point that the captain of the steamer appeared and, with him, the company superintendent, who was palpably nervous. Captain McKenna was short and forceful and when he learned the particulars of the disobedience and disturbance he was quick to act.

"Mr. King, call Burton and one or two others aft and put these men in irons. And search them. I'll turn them over to the police commissioner when we get in. They're drunk. I'll not have anything of this sort on this boat! Now, you, back up against that deck-house! I'll shoot the first man who refuses!"

As the four slunk backward, Harker and

Digitized by Google

Captain McKenna followed them, and when they had obeyed and were standing in a sullen row in the semi-light, Harker said to the captain, "I know that you are in command here and that you have given your orders, but I'd like to ask a favor of you, the favor of one captain to another.

"There's not been any trouble here to-night. These men came aft looking for me because they knew I'd not be forward. They've sailed with me and, if they have a grievance against me, I'd like to settle it with them myself."

Mr. King and three of the crew came up the deck with the steel bracelets tinkling in their hands, but Harker would not be interrupted.

"The men know me and I feel sure I can promise you there'll be no further disturbance aboard. I hope you'll not handcuff them. I'll go forward with them myself and I'll pledge you my word you'll have no further trouble. If you turn them over to the police when we get into Osafi to-night, they'll be fined or sent away to-morrow and —well, it's hard on a sailorman to damn him like that. Every skipper, every lodging-house keeper, every runner on the Coast'll find out about it and it'll hurt these men when they want to sign again. So I ask you if you'll not let me take these men forward and call it square if they behave themselves. I hope you'll do it, Captain McKenna."

Garrow and the other three had listened to this in surprised silence. They heard the clink of the handcuffs and Garrow's revolver weighed a ton in his pocket. It would be the first thing to be discovered. As Mr. King and his men advanced, Captain McKenna raised his hand to hold them as he turned to Harker and looked him in the face.

"Very well, Captain," he said, "but I can't forgive disobedience aboard here. If you can promise for these men, right and good, but I think you are taking chances with a drunken, worthless lot. Never mind, Mr. King. Now you men go forward with Captain Harker!"

"Thank you very much, Captain. Come, Garrow, and the rest of you."

Harker led the men forward without a word, nor did they speak.

When they reached the deck space allotted to them, where six or eight other second-class passengers were lying about, talking and smoking, he said to Garrow, "I've promised that you men would behave yourselves. I just ask you to remember that."

It seemed for a moment that Garrow wanted to say something in reply, but Harker turned away quickly and was lost in the darkness.

V

JOHN HARKER was among the last to leave the Yadur boat. He said good-by to the R. and D. man at the pier and started for Prince's Upper Wharf through the narrow quiet streets. At the first crossing, where there was one small light on a wall, a man stepped from a doorway and laid an arresting hand upon him.

It was Garrow and, as Harker stopped, the three others came out of the shadows and confronted him. He was unarmed and he knew that, whatever they wanted, they had him—and he remembered even the glint on Garrow's revolver.

"Well," he said, "what is it?" He felt his whole body tightening again.

"You struck me when I was in your ship, Cap'n Harker——"

The skipper was quick to interrupt. "Yes, I struck you," he said, "and I'd strike you again! I run my ship, you don't!" Harker's right arm tightened, "And you can tell these other men," he nodded toward Garrow's companions, "that I'll——"

"That's all right, Cap'n." Garrow extended his hand as if to lay it upon Harker's arm, and quickly withdrew it. "I only wanted to say I don't 'old it against you any more. I'd like you to shake 'ands with me, if you will. They'd like to, too." He nodded toward the three men close beside him in the darkness.

Harker hesitated for one moment. "Very well," he said, "if you feel that way about it, I'd be glad to shake hands with you. I think we understand now."

The handshaking was a bit awkward, but the hands met firmly and truly. Then there was a moment of silence, which Harker ended.

"If you men will come aboard the schooner in the morning, I'd like to have you back again," he said, and strode away without awaiting a reply.

Digitized by Google

THE ROAD

A Romance of Americans in the Balkans

by

Frank Savile

SYNOPSIS: Gervase Agnew, civil engineer, saves the life of Katrine Gresham, daughter of his employer, an American railroad president. The latter's partner, Gordon Glaisher, engaged to Katrine in a formal way and jealous of Agnew, half forces Gresham to put Agnew in charge of building the Bir Railway in the Balkans. Agnew, learning of Katrine's engagement, accepts. In the muddle of international politics centering about the Bir Railway he finds its construction covertly opposed by Italian secret societies, with Gessi, a sectional engineer, as leader. Jovan and other Balkan patriots are working on the road itself. Thring, Agnew's assistant, explains that the former engineer, Sanders, who died a victim to Lucia Gessi's wiles, must have had a secret plan for overcoming an unbridgeable break in the road.

CHAPTER IX

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

AS A RULE Katrine and her father exchanged little conversation at breakfast, and it was really more by accident than anything else that Katrine's eyes were raised to her father's face to discover a sudden pallor blanching it. She gave a little cry of apprehension.

"You're ill?" she asked. "Father, what is it?" She rose from her seat and hurried toward him.

He dropped the letter which he had been reading. "Don't be hysterical, daughter!" he said with a sudden petulant sternness she had never encountered in him before. "It was merely a passing—sense of chill."

She noted the hesitation of the last three words and understood, immediately, that he evaded the truth. And she saw the stamp upon the cover of the letter. It was the Montenegrin one. She recognized with a strange thrill the bold, sprawling writing.

"I am not a child just released from the nursery, father," she said quietly. "I am a woman with discretion. You have had bad news from Bir."

He started—obviously his nerves were unstrung. It was unlike Thorpe Gresham to show mental agitation under any circumstances, and these, Katrine divined, must be exceptional ones.

"I recognized Mr. Agnew's writing," she explained. "There is something wrong. I am not a fool, father. I might even be of some possible use to you."

"If it can stimulate my professional acumen to the point of realizing where I am to lay my hands upon six to eight million dollars I should welcome your collaboration," said Gresham, with an artificial at-

Digitized by Google

tempt to compass his usual aspect of dry humor.

She looked a little incredulous. "You are in want of money—*you?*" she asked.

The lines of exasperation creased his forehead and furrowed his cheek. With a sudden access of irritation he picked up the letter and tossed it toward her.

"You can see for yourself," he said. He sat back in his chair, his eyes upon her as she read, his aspect full of expectant scorn. As she laid down the closely written sheets he laughed unmirthfully.

"That is how I have been served!" he cried. "My fortune—your fortune—the moneys entrusted to my care as head of a great corporation are lost—why? Because one man has been unable to keep his lips from a bottle! Sanders has ruined us—that is the plain meaning of Agnew's statement!"

"But in this matter of the bridge—and the proposed deviation?" she asked. "Do *you* see no alternative?"

"I? I am not on the spot, but surely the facts speak for themselves. Agnew puts them plainly enough. In the Winter the road can not be used. Am I to trust to the Summer traffic for my dividends? And we shall be the laughing-stock of the engineering world! The road has to be deviated—that is a sure thing. And the capital for it? Where is that to come from?"

She kept silence for a moment, tapping her fingers nervously against the table.

"Is—is Mr. Agnew just to the memory of Mr. Sanders?" she asked at last.

"Just!" He echoed the word scornfully. "A man, finding that the keystone of an arch can not be laid, still builds the masonry which is to support it! The methods of the bank robber we can provide against. But the knave who is also a fool? That is the one danger beyond our anticipating."

"But supposing he *had* some method of dealing with the difficulty?"

"Will you outline one?" His voice was fiercely sarcastic. She flinched.

"Mr. Agnew proposes the downright method of tunnelling through beyond the canyon?" she meditated.

"Two miles of it, through the hardest rock in Europe!" cried her father. "All to avoid a sixty yard bridge!"

She made a sudden decided gesture. "Wasn't he considered a genius, this Mr. Sanders?" she cried. "Wasn't he one of the leaders in his profession?"

"That is an added aggravation. He was."

"Then that is proof to my mind that he had worked out a solution and was merely keeping it to himself. It must be so. How could it be otherwise? A man of his standing to trip like that! The thing is manifestly absurd!"

THERE was a slight unfurrowing of her father's brow. Then the black frown settled in his eyes again. "Drink!" he said tersely. "The most brilliant brain may be ruined by it. Agnew says plainly that Sanders went down to death in hopeless intoxication."

"Was he notoriously a drinking man—before you gave him this post?"

He smiled contemptuously. "Should I have been fool enough to give it to him? No—he was a skilled and brilliant man, with, for his age, a brilliant record."

"The whole thing, then, remains a mystery. I know what I should do if I were you. I should go down fighting—I should not fling up the sponge yet awhile!"

Her eyes were bright, her face flushed with ardor. He looked at her with curiosity. This was a daughter so far unrevealed—a woman in whom passion might have been latent but from whose lips he had never heard it emerge.

"Yes?" he queried. "Yes?"

"Go and see for yourself! Investigate, and chance may supply the key to the mystery. But at least—act!"

Her voice rang clear and still more vehement. He felt a sudden tide run warm in his veins.

"I must consider," he demurred. "But—perhaps, I could go."

"There is no 'perhaps' about it!" she retorted. "Let us go at once!"

"Us?" he cried in sudden wonder. "Us?"

"I shall accompany you," she said. "It is necessary."

Something in her tone told him that her words did not express the whole of her mind. Expostulations, which had risen to his lips, died.

"Why?" he asked quietly.

"Because, having broken my engagement to Gordon, my position here will be awkward."

He started. "You will break it—after all?" he asked.

"Yes. And come away with you."

He shrugged his shoulders with a pessi-

Digitized by Google

mistic air. "Europe—you can accompany me there," he allowed. "But not to the Bir. There is no accommodation; everything is of the roughest. And why are you making this sudden change about Gordon? A month ago you decided to break with him and I suggested delay and you delayed—long enough to decide that you would not break with him at all. And now another impulse? I think the reason must be that you are half a dozen different persons in the same week."

"Perhaps I am," she agreed coolly. "But I have made up my mind finally that one of them will never be Gordon Glaisher's wife. And you are wrong in calling my first decision of a month ago an impulse. It was not; it was an instinct. The decision to reverse it—that was an impulse if you like, and one which I regret. I was—bewildered. You will get your car attached to the night express?"

"To-night?" he expostulated. "That would be acting on impulse indeed!"

She shook her head. "No," she contradicted. "On instinct again. I feel that this situation has no place for delay. You should be on the spot—within ten days if it is possible. I don't think you have yet grasped the bigness of the issue, not only to ourselves, but to the nations concerned. And not only your honor is in the balance, but, to my mind, that of our country also. We fought in among the crowd of European contractors and took this thing out of their very hands. Keep it—ah, don't let us be beaten, scorned, accused of accepting a challenge and then avoiding the issue—with shame!"

HE MADE a gesture of bewilderment. "I had no notion that I had such a daughter!" he cried. "You are absolutely astounding to me, Katrine! What have your interests been up to now that you can fling yourself into a matter of which you can have no more than the dimmest of conceptions?"

Her nostrils dilated; she drew herself up in her seat. "My ideals have been shallowness itself," she allowed. "Because some of your blood has stirred in my veins, are you surprised? I want to be free to live—among living people—among things that matter!"

"Gordon is one of the things which—don't matter?" he asked dryly.

"I accepted Gordon, and the situation of regarding him as my future husband, without any consideration. *One* of my half-dozen selves, to which you alluded, saw no reason against it."

"You will do as you like, no doubt," he said. "It matters less than it would have done three weeks ago."

She shot him a quick inquisitive glance. "Why?" she demanded crisply.

He hesitated. "If you had broken with him, then he would—have left Netteville. That would have been very—undesirable. Now you yourself are going to leave. He can stay."

She meditated the form of this answer silently for a moment. "Then—then last month Gordon did discuss the—the possibility of my—breaking with him?"

Gresham rose and gathered his papers together. "Not precisely. He—he had doubts of the sincerity of your affection."

"Oh!" She paused. "Was he jealous?" she asked bluntly.

"I think he may have been," he allowed.

"And you wanted him kept quiet? Father, you have not acted fairly by me! You induced me to postpone an action which—should not have been postponed. And I think you did more. You told Mr. Agnew of my engagement to Gordon?"

He flushed. And his eyes did not meet hers quite squarely. "The exigencies of our conversation practically demanded it," he temporized. "I had to keep him that morning—I had to explain to him why I thought Gordon might show you over the works as well as himself. Why should I not do so?" His concluding tone was rough, almost bullying.

"The exigencies were exigencies of business," she said coldly. "For reasons best known to yourself you wished to keep Gordon at your side. Now you do not mind dropping him. And you have made an innocent accomplice of me."

She leaned forward with a weary movement and dropped her elbow on the table. "I shall have to tell him the truth," she said. "I can not marry him, but I shall have to apologize to him for having been deceived by you." She raised her eyes with a sudden accusing glance. "If you used me for business purposes you have not been commonly honest, father," she added.

He marched toward the door.

"This may be the modern standard of

Digitized by Google

demeanor for children toward parents," he said. "I do not propose to remain while my business integrity is being criticized by my own daughter. You had better make your own arrangements with a view to a possible journey to New York to-night. Good-by." He closed the door with decisive emphasis.

CHAPTER X

THE MENACE OF THE MORASS

LAKE VODRA shone blue in the sun like a jewel set in an enameled casing. The purple glory of the surrounding hills sank through infinite gradations of gold and gray and green into the fringe of rushes that girdled its shores. Cranes and pelicans soared and circled above its waters. Herds of goats frolicked along the steeps that overhung its rockier banks. From its southern end pealed out the great frog-song of Vodra which echoes down into Albania and is heard far up into the wild ravines of that strong man's land—Montenegro.

For centuries the frogs have had intermittent rivals in echo-stirring sound—an occasional rifle-shot as some border vendetta reaches its culmination; the savage cries of vanquished or victor as some tribal fight is lost or won; now and again—but not often—the brazen throat of artillery as a too daring foe has flung his strength upon the Great Rock Throne of Cernagora and found it still its own impregnable self.

No wonder the frogs were lifting their dull monotonous note into shrill peals of indignation—or so the peasants averred. Their fastnesses were being invaded. Something brown, something immense and undefined, was advancing day by day and yard by yard across the morass which marked the point where the lake ended and the River Jana commenced.

An embankment was cleaving the reeds. Issuing from the mountains, the Great Bir Railway was hewing out for itself a path across the plain. The difficulties of the mountain passes had not been overcome—or so the workmen swore and made no secret of their indignation, but the order had come and work was shifted inland to the easier gradient.

A little truck-engine fussed down the roughly laid track along the embankment and halted at its end. Three men descended from it and looked in the direction of the farther embankment which started from the far side of the morass and reached out toward the one on which they stood.

It was Agnew who took a pair of binoculars from a case, focussed them on a painted stake on the farther shore, and then gave an exclamation of annoyance. His companions were Jovan and Thring.

"The level has risen a full foot!" he announced. "The longer the drought, the higher the water rises! It is a miracle—a phenomenon without an explanation. But, as I told you yesterday, it is so!"

Thring had a telescope at his eye. He shrugged his shoulders. "Politics, nature, mankind! They are all against us. Why not the Powers of Darkness too?" he asked pessimistically.

A man was sitting in a rough, country-built boat, fifty yards away. His craft was of a curiously amphibious kind, for it was seldom properly afloat, and at the same time not often supported by solid earth. The boatman used a pole when he wished to force himself from one tiny lagoon to another. A boy sat beside him.

He stood up and shouted a greeting to the Albanian.

Jovan shaded his eyes and stared at the boat and its crew. Then he laughed grimly. "If you need information of the ongoing of the morass, it lies ready for your culling," he told Agnew. "That is Uiko the fisherman. He has hauled a living out of the lake and the marshes for five-and-twenty years. And he is a rascal among rascals, look you! He has lived among frogs and has acquired their slipperiness. Do I summon him?"

Agnew nodded. Jovan lifted up his bull voice. The man and the youth used their poles swiftly. They plowed a groove through the slime and ran gaily alongside the embankment edge.

AGNEW examined the newcomer keenly. Humorous eyes of gray were lifted to meet his from a sun-browned face, clean-shaved save for an iron-gray mustache. His clothes of braided serge might have been white once, but were now the precise color of the lake mud and might have been despoiled from half a dozen different scarecrows. His waist-cloth was torn and tasseled with a hundred tatters. The barrel of the universal revolver which was thrust into the folds was

Digitized by Google

red with rust. String sandals, *opanki*, were upon his feet, but of these little more than remnants remained. Unkempt, dirty, disheveled, he stood up and saluted the company with entire complacence and politeness.

"God's fortune be yours!" he cried fervently. "How do I serve you and the *Gospodin*, Jovan?"

"What ails the lake?" asked the Albanian tersely. "It is a time of drought, yet the water rises day by day and foot by foot."

"It is no common lake, ours," returned Uiko proudly. "There are mysteries attached to it. It has special protections from the Hidden World and special ongoings. Yes, it has risen a matter of a yard since a week back."

"Why?" demanded Agnew.

"It is the Will of Allah," returned the fisherman piously. "I have known it so happen before, but never to this extent. Has the *Gospodin* seen fit to examine the northern end of the lake?"

"No. What has the north to do with us here, thirty miles away?"

"Much, *Gospodin*. The Jana runs into the lake from the Montenegrin highlands in twice the volume—or so it seems to me—with which it escapes through this Vodra opening beneath our eyes. Other streamlets also empty themselves across the western and eastern shores. Yet this is the only outlet—or the only visible one. That is a riddle, is it not?"

Agnew nodded. "Have you the answer—if it is as you say?"

The fisherman shrugged his shoulders. "The answer lies in the ravine of Slivnitz, *Gospodin*. The level of the River Liva? That stands how?"

Agnew frowned. "That is foolishness. The Liva? The other side of the ranges? What has that to do with this?"

"That lies within the councils of the One God. But be assured that it is so." He looked up at Jovan. "Have you given the matter no attention?" he asked. "Is it not as I say?"

Jovan stared down at him with a puckered brow. Then he made a slow affirmative motion of the head.

"This much is true, signor," he said. "The level of the Liva, now, at the time of the melting snows, is below Summer mark. I did not give the matter thought, though I remarked it. This may be a matter worth investigation."

Thring nodded vehemently. "Yes," he agreed. "There may be something in it. Underground rivers? They seam these hills."

Agnew shook his head. "I shall want better proof than our friend here has supplied." He turned and faced the soaring ranges at their back. "You would have me believe that the torrent which roars past Slivnitz and Gorac bores its way under that!"

His gesture was unmistakable, though his words had been in English. The fisherman, still watching, saw and replied in his own tongue. "*Gospodin*," he cried, "may I tell you the tale of Jevad Pasha, sometime Vali of this district? It has a bearing on the matter."

Agnew smiled. "If it is not too long and is to the point, I will hear you," he agreed.

"TWO MINUTES will suffice," said Uiko gravely. "Jevad Pasha, *Gospodin*, had a fortified dwelling on the slope of the ridge which divides the plain of the Nica from Bir. Down the plain runs a river which issues of strength to turn a mill, full fed from its source in the rock. When war broke out the Montenegrin army swept down upon the ridge and cut off the Pasha from communication with the main body of the Turkish troops in Bir. Another battalion of Montenegrins held the pass to Vodra and the south.

"The Pasha was invested, with two hundred men, in his fortified dwelling on the ridge. It commands on all sides the bare slopes of stone by which it is approached. He had artillery. At the very gate of the fortifications the river gushed, as I have indicated, from the earth. Water was, therefore, assured to him. To storm such a position would have involved a terrible loss. In spite of the protests of his officers the Montenegrin Prince wisely decided to starve Jevad out. 'A week will see the end of it. He has no provisions.'

"So the investing forces waited that one week. They waited another, a third, a fourth. The Prince held his men with difficulty on the leash. At the commencement of the sixth week the leash broke. It broke so swiftly and with such suddenness that two thousand men rose as one and were at the fort gates before the echoes of the first salvo of the Pasha's guns had died.

"On each other's shoulders, on poles and pine tree-limbs new hewed they climbed; by dint of nails and teeth and handholds

Digitized by Google

that in saner moments would have been no hold at all they swung themselves up and fell upon Jevad and his men. Of the two hundred were left alive none—or, to be the absolute servant of truth, one alone. In the kitchen they found a half-witted negro slave, cooking, and, by the One God, he had wherewithal to cook!

"Mutton, *Gospodin*, mutton carcases were hung round the wall two deep! Thirty new killed sheep they counted, hanging from hooks, and in the courtyard were the fresh pelts of five times as many more!

"They gaped their wonder till the cook, being threatened with a draught from a still boiling pot, led them to the river brim. They waited—five minutes, ten minutes, and finally the carcass of a sheep rose up through the waters, circled a moment, and then floated placidly to the edge!

"And now the *Gospodin* understands. The Turks who held the plain of the Bir knew what the Montenegrins were discovering for the first time. They fed their comrades by the way of the river, which, passing across the upper plains, disappeared into the ridge of Nica. But none, save Jevad and intimates of his in the farther camp was aware that the new-sprung river of the ravine was the placid stream of the Bir waked to new life after its wanderings through the earth. Water that makes its way through the rocks of one district might, in my reasoning, pass through those of another."

Thring nodded. "And I, who have seen what I have seen in the Balkans, see nothing incredible in it either," he affirmed. "The river of Gravosa? That is a phenomenon on the same lines, is it not?"

Agnew made a gesture of assent.

"We have not such proofs as Jevad Pasha gave to his besiegers," said Uiko. "Perhaps the intelligence of the *Gospodin* will see a way to produce them?"

Agnew shrugged his shoulders. "Lake Vodra is thirty miles long and nearly half as broad," he said. "We might perambulate its shores for some time, my friend, and see nothing."

THE FISHERMAN scratched his head meditatively. "In course of conversation with new comers new ideas ferment in one's brain, do you see?" he observed apologetically. "I wonder now——" He broke off, biting his lips.

Suddenly he flung up his hand with an emphatic gesture. "Yes, *Gospodin!*" he cried. "I smell mystery here. Some three days back a quantity of dead fish were floating on the lake. A few hours before that I had thought I heard thunder, though the sky was clear. But men who came down the lake from Jeka explained that Esuli Bey had amused himself by blowing up the remains of half a dozen *londras* and their cargoes of building-stone which had been sunk outside the harbor of the village six months back.

"They were a danger, or so he appeared to think, to the proper navigation of this highly important arm of the lake on which six families, perhaps, have dwellings. Nobody thought of it save as proof of the incapacity and wastefulness of Esuli Bey. And those who professed to know said that his charges were laid fifty fathoms distant from where the *londras* sank, and that the lake was mightily disturbed by what was after all no very great explosion!

"Now Esuli Bey is a man of very peculiar habits. Show me his hand at work and though I will not read the riddles of his forging, that there is a riddle to read is seldom a matter of question. Has he part or lot in this matter? Allah, the Only Seat of Omniscience, knows, but not you or I, *Gospodin*. Yet Allah has given us brains—to guess with."

"That is too fanciful an explanation altogether, my friend," said Agnew. "There is a long string of proof wanting to connect the two events."

"That is so, *Gospodin*. But then you do not know—Esuli Bey."

Thring spoke in a low tone to Jovan. The latter answered with a decided nod. "It is a matter worth a little probing," he said. "I, too, know the Bey of Jeka. He is no ordinary country official. The One Allah and Our Lord the Sultan alone know why he is to be found here, ruling a district that holds less than a thousand acres of taxable land. He was a hanger-on at the Palace, so they tell me. A man reared in softness and intrigue. What is he doing among these cut-throats of the Jeka?"

"It is a matter outside our concern," said Agnew coldly. "But if you show me where and how the added volume of water enters, or fails to leave, the lake, a reward will not be wanting. Do you see, my fisher

Digitized by Google

friend? Practical information will find me in a generous mood."

"In that case, *Gospodin*, I must shift my fishing-grounds. There will have to be a migration of lake trout which I shall follow to Jeka—or so the curious will be informed. In any case I shall fish—for news. When it is found I bring it—where?"

"To me, and to no one else," said Agnew. "Inquire of the foreman of the embankment works where I am to be found and then come quickly, if you have anything worth bringing."

"It is well understood. I have your leave to go—now?"

Agnew made an affirmative gesture. The fisherman climbed back into his deplorable craft, seized a pole and shoved mightily. A ragged sail was set. The absurd apology for a boat gained speed, rode gaily across the ripples, and appeared to dwindle into the sunlit expanse.

Thring watched it through a minute's silence. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Well," he said, "we must remember that this is not America, any way."

Agnew nodded comprehendingly. "I despise no help," he answered quietly. "And the need is urgent. If this rise of the waters continues—if the protection of these acres of mud is to be swept away from the face of the embankment——" His shoulders rose and fell in a pessimistic shrug.

CHAPTER XI

TEMPTATION

"WHEN our employer appears where do you propose to house him?" asked Thring.

They were standing on the eastward side of the lake, to which they had crossed in an ungainly barge. The afternoon hour had been spent in detailed examination of the new laid track.

"He will be prepared to rough it," said Agnew. "At any rate, he has no alternative. I will instruct Gessi to get another frame hut up before his arrival."

Jovan made a movement of surprise. "Signor Gessi is here, signor?" he inquired.

"I moved him up three days back. Section foremen, with no section work to manage, appear to me out of place," said Agnew dryly.

"I did not know," said the Albanian simply.

"You mean that I did not tell you?"

"I mean, signor, that news should have reached me—not necessarily from yourself. It is known by those under me that I expect to *know* things. So the Signor Proprietor of the road is to lodge here, with Signor Gessi at his elbow?"

"This will, no doubt, be his headquarters. He has much to see."

"And hear, signor, if Gessi is to be in perpetual audience. He is a—a man, this Signor Gresham? One to whom Allah has given strength of body and of mind to deal with matters of leadership? One such as—yourself?"

"He is a man," said Agnew. "And one with knowledge far beyond my own."

Jovan turned his eyes toward the lake through a silent moment. He appeared to choose his words. "Knowledge?" He pronounced the word with a sort of speculative intonation. "It is a thing gained in more ways than one," he hazarded. "Force, now? That is a compelling weapon with men. But with women? Not always, signor, not always."

Agnew turned and surveyed him with amused curiosity. The Albanian's way was devious. It was not easy to preceive where his present drift was taking the conversation. "Proceed, my friend," said Agnew. "You wish me to do—what?"

Jovan held up his hands. "Am I the director of this road?" he cried. "I, and all who toil on it, are in your hands, signor, to deal with as you will. My thoughts were turned from business—for the moment. We spoke of knowledge, did we not, and in the same moment my eyes fell upon—the signorina."

He spoke with significant emphasis. Agnew wheeled.

SHE was standing in the door of a hut sixty or seventy yards away. The horizontal rays of the setting sun fell upon her as limelight falls upon the darkened stage. And, indeed, it was with this thought dominant in his mind that Agnew strolled toward her. She had the dramatic sense, this girl. Her pose, the slow but sudden effect of her appearance, was a matter studied, and studied to perfection. She drooped her head in answer to Agnew's bow with a complacency that was regally assured.

Digitized by Google

"Good evening, signorina," he said. "The inconveniences of your sudden change of abode have been overcome?"

"I notice no difference," she said quietly. "To me all these outland dwellings are the same. Will you enter, signor?"

He hesitated, looking back toward his companions who still stood on the far side of the square. "I should like to satisfy myself that you have suffered no more than can be helped by the move," he answered, "but I must not leave my friends for long." It was a hint, and was intended for one.

She did not take it. She turned her back on the two men as she motioned toward the open door. "Let them wait," she said. "Are they not your underlings, signor?"

"Mr. Thring is my colleague," said Agnew sharply.

"Ah!" The monosyllable held the very core of indifference. "Will you be seated, signor? I do not care for the company of Mr. Thring, I myself." She made a gesture toward one of the rough, rope-bound chairs. Agnew sat down.

She leaned against the table, her eyes fixed on him. The slow dawn of a smile hovered about her lips. Agnew felt a sense of physical discomfort in the intentness of her regard.

"Your father?" he inquired; chance rather than intention supplied the query. "Still at work? Perhaps at a distance this evening?"

"I do not know—or care," she said quickly. "It was of Signor Thring that we were speaking. I do not like him. I wished you to understand that. In future do not bring him here, signor."

Agnew rose. "I understand you, signorina," he said quietly. "You mean that I am not to bring—myself. Mr. Thring is a good deal more than my assistant. He is my friend."

"But not mine," she answered quickly, frowningly. "He has told you lies about me—of that I am assured."

Agnew's eyebrows rose in astonishment. "He has scarcely mentioned your name," he answered.

"He has not busied himself with tales of the Signor Sanders and myself?" she asked suspiciously.

"Mr. Sanders was a man for whom he held a high esteem and affection—at one time," said Agnew. "He respects his memory. Since the day of my arrival he has scarcely mentioned his name."

Her eyes grew wide—with wonder, this time, rather than suspicion. "Then why, signor," she asked slowly, "have you not returned after your first visit—to *me?*"

AGNEW stood silent, his hand upon the back of the chair from which he had risen. The dark eyes opposite seemed to hold him in a restraint which was none the less shackling for being intangible. And it was not in the girl's eyes alone, this influence. The warm coloring, the supple lines of her figure, the play of light and shadow in the bronze masses of her hair, did not these allure? Did not they cry silently to natural passion? Were they not appealing to every instinct of a man?

He felt the glow which responded through his veins to the sudden invitation. Unconsciously he drew himself back a pace. Words fit for this crisis eluded him. He knew only that he was being tempted—that what his body urged him to accept his intelligence revolted at. Protest was in every fiber of his soul.

"Signorina?" he said breathlessly. Signorina?"

She rose, too—slowly, gracefully, with the perfect grace, indeed, with which the wild beast rouses in its lair. She faced him.

"I am a woman," she said, and the leashed tremors in her voice were vibrant. "I am a woman, and you, signor, are a man. Here, among these puppets"—she flung out her hand in a gesture which seemed to include, and to menace, every human life within her consciousness—"you are *the* man. Tell me! Here, save yourself, is there one worthy of attention such as—mine?"

Unconsciously—or was it with the art which can feign unconsciousness?—her hand stretched out in his direction in appeal. Her face, hard in disdain, softened. The fierce arrogance of her eyes died from flame into a glow—a glow awaiting no more than one responsive breath to kindle again to lambent heat. Every fiber in the man's being thrilled to the fascination in her words, her glance, in every intonation of her voice.

And yet—he held to his silence as a drowning swimmer holds to the chance spar. How could he answer and not offend

Digitized by Google

or—and was not this the greater peril?—stimulate the feeling to which a chance word might be the kindling?

She moved again restlessly, and toward him.

"You are of the North," she said quickly. "In your land, so I have been told, the men are clay, the women stone. The man seeks in the woman a plaything, a new ornament for his house. The woman sees in the man the means to keep her from starvation, to place clothes upon her back, to reap gold for her sowing. Would you learn of better things? Here am I, then, ready—impatient even—to teach!"

Her arms went out—her palms were open; she stood before him, appeal incarnate. And now his silence was an armor wherein, for the first time, he felt the joints gape wide. And so, pricked by impulse, he spoke precipitantly.

"I am indeed of the North, signorina," he answered. "I am bred—and keep—to its customs. I have no need, or time, even, to profit by your teaching."

"Time!" Her voice leaped up into scorn again. "Is not life itself long enough? What are the important things in it? Work, unending toil, selling your youth for gold? And then, when your forces have been spent in gaining what you destroy as you gain, more toil again? Is that the end you seek? Is that what ambition has waiting for you—on the summit of your desire?"

Again something pricked through his defense of stolidity. Was it so? Had life offered—did it still offer—no more than that? His memory winged back down his experience. A little shiver shook him. It was true—toil, toil, and always and interminably the fetters of toil for toil's own dreary sake seemed to have been on his limbs. Save once only. But now? Love had been his through that brief span wrenched from the hands of Toil—and Love was lost.

He looked temptation squarely in the face. His nervousness was gone. He felt a sense of coolness, of calculation. It was a summons no woman of his own caste and race could issue in such suddenness, and one, therefore, to which he had no experience in reply. But could he not make his own experiences? Here, in Southern Europe, what were the customs and ideals of his Northern home to him?

And then a new illuminating thought struck him—struck upon his consciousness with the swiftness of inspiration. What hint had lain in Jovan's words five minutes before? Knowledge? Could he not serve two masters? Or, rather, deceive Passion by a simulated service which would be given to the interests of Toil after all? Had Lucia Gessi been in the confidence of Sanders? Did she know that engineering secret which was the still undislodged menace of the road?

The stiffness, the defensiveness, of his attitude relaxed. He raised his lowered eyes and looked into hers.

Her lips parted. A little cry escaped her, triumphant and yet yielding, soft and yet full of mastery. She saw him caged, hers, the hunted in the toils of the hunter, the prey won. Her bosom heaved in premonition of that surrender to the vanquished which is the rapture of womanhood and of womanhood alone.

AND then Fate played her hand. Footsteps paused outside the door. It was pushed roughly open. Gaspare entered, the splash of spring water falling from buckets which swung from each end of a wooden yoke upon his shoulders, while his disengaged hand steadied a basket upon his head. He gave an exclamation of surprise as his glance fell upon Agnew. He stood in the center of the floor, his mouth agape.

Lucia gave another cry—one that concentrated hate and surprise and defeat, that rang out into the open square and reached the ears of the two who watched and waited. She darted across the half-dozen paces that separated her from her brother. Her open hand swung up and fell with fierce violence upon his unprotected cheek.

And then—she was gone. Gaspare and Agnew were left confronting each other as men might meet when dazed by the passing of a cyclone, and still incredulous of the sudden fury of which its path is the proof.

Slowly the boy's hands reached up to and lowered the basket. Methodically he disembarrassed himself of his yoke and pails. While he did so he did not cease to regard Agnew with ingenuous amazement.

The latter smiled. "A sudden quarrel, Gaspare?" he hazarded. "Or is this the sequel of an old dispute?"

Digitized by Google

Gaspare rubbed his cheek. "A dispute?" he grumbled. "With me there can be none, signor; I never question her will. But a blow that can not reach its appointed target is always mine." He blinked. "So I take it that *you* have angered her?" His glance expressed quiet satisfaction.

Agnew shook his head. "By no means," he said. "Or not intentionally."

"You said—what?" prompted the youth.

"Nothing," said Agnew. "Nothing at all."

Gaspare's eyes brightened. "That explains it, signor," he answered. "To say nothing—that is what exasperates her. It is better to make a remark if it be but the repetition of the Rosary. The Signor Sanders, do you see, when he wished to divert himself with her—remained silent." He hesitated. "And so was safe enough," he added. "Yet in the end he spoke—too much."

Agnew nodded. "And so—fell?" he asked. "Well, I shall come again—and speak, Gaspare. But not, as you suggest, too much. To our next meeting!"

He smiled and, smiling, passed out of the shadowed hut into the sunset light of the open square.

CHAPTER XII

VILIP

ON THE deck of the Austrian-Lloyd coasting steamer which was slowly grooving a course into the calm waters of the Bay of Antigno stood a man, busily engaged upon the duties of a valet. He did all these things with precision, but not with the automatic precision of an expert trained to a job. He meditated over his tasks, he gave them consideration, and achieved results by methods born, not of experience, but of thought. And every few minutes he found time to raise his eyes toward the shore and the barrier of the hills that sheltered it from the east. Once he spared a glance toward a man and a girl who, sitting a few yards away, were also taking stock of their nearly reached destination.

The girl noted the glance. She watched the busy fingers tugging at the strap buckles, and then she turned toward her companion with an amused smile.

"How long has Vilip been in our service? Eight and forty hours?" she hazarded. "How completely he fills the picture now! We can hardly imagine ourselves in this European setting without him."

Mr. Gresham smiled back, a little grimly. "I can imagine it," he disagreed. "Without him we should have been lambs in the hands of wolves. Vilip may rob us in reason, but he will rob on agreed terms and we shall know the extent of our liabilities. And as for comfort? He makes the entire difference between placid enjoyment and perpetual discord."

Katrine nodded. "His self-introduction was a little informal," she said, "and I doubt if he has had much practise. But his manners? They are perfection."

"After all," argued Mr. Gresham, "one can hardly expect a courier who changes his employer once a month to supply a ten years' certificate of character. His written references were excellent. He produces vouchers for all his disbursements, and I hold the purse. I don't think there is much room for profitable dishonesty in his position." He lifted his binoculars. "I do not recognize Agnew on the pier," he said, after a pause.

A slight flush rose to Katrine's face. Silently she took the glasses from her father's hand and focussed them. She searched the group at the landing-place. "No," she said quietly. "There is one man in European clothes, but not Mr. Agnew."

Her father looked at her keenly, parted his lips to speak—and thought better of it. He beckoned the courier to approach.

The man came up with a little bow that seemed to express more the deference due from a young man to his elder than the obsequiousness of a servant to an employer. His brown eyes were alert with attention and inquiry while he received final instructions as to their landing.

They were within a furlong of the pier by now and the waiting figures upon it were to be distinguished by the naked eye. Katrine examined them one by one and with a growing sense of disappointment. He did not know she was to be here—she had expressly forbidden her father to communicate the fact, but Agnew, she told herself illogically, should have had some instinct of her coming.

She had poised so much of anticipation upon this meeting that the possibility of

Digitized by Google

Agnew's absence had practically escaped her. She had pictured the scene a hundred times. She had seen the incredulous smile of welcome leap into the gray-blue eyes; she had sent them a silent glance of reassurance which would rend all the clouds of the last two months and renew, in one moment, the situation that had obtained before Agnew's petulant departure. She had seen herself reinstated in his confidence, his esteem, and finally his affection; she had, in short, decided that Gervase Agnew was to be hers again—hers as she had determined he should be from the moment his huge strength had been called into effort to save her from dreadful and instant death.

AND now? The stage was set, the wild background excellent, the supers all that could be desired. Romance had all its attributes at hand. The heroine was word-perfect in her part. But the hero? She listened with petulant eagerness to the explanation given by the tall young man who stepped aboard as the gangway reached the bulwarks and was addressed by her father as Thring.

Agnew? Yes, Agnew was very busy. The Vodra embankment was taking up the whole of his attention. He had sent his assistant to bring Mr. Gresham as speedily as possible to the scene of operations. That trolley and gang? Yes, they were waiting.

With a queer smile Gresham introduced his daughter. Thring, though a trifle puzzled, was by no means amazed. He opined that Miss Gresham was taking the trip down the coast to Corfu. A very pleasant week could be spent over it. Had she companions abroad?

Miss Gresham was indeed making a trip, she explained, but to Vodra, if that was the name of the trolley's destination, and then to Bir.

Thring clutched at his hair. "But you *can't!*" he declared desperately.

"Aren't there trolleys enough?" asked Katrine demurely.

"Trolleys!" His despair was dramatic. "There are no houses, no accommodation, no proper food, no *anything!* It is out of the question—it is really *absurd*, I assure you!"

Gresham nodded. "From New York to Venice I have been putting that view of the question to her, Thring. Every time I was rebuffed. But since we took the boat down the Adriatic I have wrapped myself in fatalism. She means to come—she has *got* to come. We must make the best of it."

Katrine smiled assentingly. "Yes, Mr. Thring," she assured him, "that is so!"

He looked at her through a moment's silence, still incredulous. "You have absolutely made up your mind?" he said at last. "It's final?"

"Quite final," she said. "Trolley or my own limbs—something has got to get me to Vodra."

He shrugged his shoulders and shouted to a man upon the quay. It was Jovan Vaco, who replied laconically and then spoke in quick undertones to the dozen men who surrounded him. With dignified haste they placed a carpet of sacks upon the leading trolley, unbound their waist-cloths, and draped them over the floor and seat made of packing-cases. The Albanian extended his hand as Katrine landed, and, with an air of courtly deference, helped her to take a seat. As he wheeled toward the pile of baggage he encountered the placid smile of Mr. Gresham's courier.

"My name is Vilip," explained the brown-eyed man pleasantly. "I am in the service of the Signor Proprietor. We seem to be traveling—*the endless road?*"

The Albanian drew himself up, kept silence for a pregnant moment, and then touched his forehead with *two* fingers outstretched. The variation from the accepted form of salutation was so slight that it would have escaped notice by an ordinary passer-by. But a glint in the courier's brown eyes showed that it was recognized and with satisfaction.

"The endless road," agreed Jovan placidly. "May Allah give us guidance thereon!"

Vilip took up a bag and bestowed it carefully on the trolley. He drew back and viewed it as an artist might view a tone or a tint added speculatively to a masterpiece.

"How are matters going?" he said in an undertone.

The Albanian shrugged his shoulders. "The attack is being pressed from half a score of quarters. One hardly knows which way to face. But we have a *man* with us. And now, if my instincts are not at fault, this your employer is another such. What is this woman? His daughter, did I under-

Digitized by Google

stand? There may be a niche for her in our scheme."

"IT WILL be for you to find it, then," smiled the courier. "They are beyond my plumbing, these American women, though I was eighteen months at the Embassy in Washington."

"As *kavass?*" grinned Jovan, as he heaved up a trunk and placed it beside the bag. "Or did my eyes once behold those limbs in the uniform of a major and a bey? That must have been in a previous existence, my good—Vilip."

"Allah gives to each the destiny he deserves," said the courier. "In some other life perhaps my sins were requitted by being made a military secretary—with no more to do than spend my hours in the foolish company of females. The All Merciful, being now appeased, may have freed me to serve worthier things. How long to Vodra with your band of outlaws and the trolleys?"

"Four hours, including transit at the ravine of Slivnitz," said the other. "There is where our hardest nut has to be cracked. You can exercise your God-given imagination on the problem when you see it. I wonder——" He broke off, shrugging his shoulders.

"You wonder?" repeated the courier, as he busied himself with a faulty buckle. "You wonder what, my friend?"

"The notion came to me that Allah's scheme may have included the sending of this man's daughter to our assistance. One woman, I verily believe, holds the secret key to our success. Can another pluck it from her? I wonder—I greatly wonder!"

"A military axiom is that like seldom conquers like," said Vilip didactically. "We send mounted troops against infantry in square—or did, before artillery was mistress of every battlefield. A man to probe a woman's heart—that is my notion of it."

The Albanian gave a disparaging little sniff. "Your notion has neither experience nor wisdom behind it," he derided. "I, do you see, have been married twice. And you?"

"Never—to Allah be special acknowledgments!" smiled the courier. "I have escaped that net, whatever else has snared me."

"And thus much knowledge has escaped you with the experience," retorted the other. "We shall see. Is that the last of your chattels? Allah alone knows where all this is to be bestowed in a two-roomed frame hut."

"Sufficient for the moment the cares thereof," said Vilip, and turned to his employer. He made an encouraging wave of the hand toward the trolley.

"If monsieur will take his seat beside mademoiselle?" he hazarded politely.

Mr. Gresham mounted. Thring followed. The courier, with a self-depreciative smile at Jovan, ensconced himself among the baggage. The trolley rolled off, added speed to speed, and within an hour was gaining the steeper gradients of the foothills. But the shadows cast by the setting sun were slanting across the plain of the Vodra before the travelers had passed, by cradle transit, the ravine of Slivnitz, climbed the soaring curves of the pass above it, and rolled out into view of the lake and the silver radiance of its waters. The trolley was poised upon the brim of a long descent.

They moved forward, Jovan's hand upon the brakes, which, for the moment, he did not find it necessary to apply. The track, indeed, dropped downwards at an easy gradient, but nearly a mile of it was in view. A fair speed was safe and allowable. They ran into a short cutting between terraces of rock.

A sudden exclamation came suddenly and hoarsely from Jovan's lips. He flung the whole of his weight upon the brakes with a jerking force that flung Katrine from her seat. And the tracksmen were already upon the ballast, adding the full weight of their bodies and the compulsion of sinew and thew to bring the wheels to a grudging halt. There was a roar and a crash.

A torrent of boulders and splintered rocks thundered from the edge of terraced stone and fell upon the track not five yards ahead of the point of their stoppage!

Jovan and his men leaped up the crag as startled wild goats leap, the former snatching at the long revolver in his belt. The sound of a shot woke the echoes; another followed. And then a figure burst into view, running—a figure that crouched as it ran, seeking cover blindly where no cover was. The fugitive fled as the ferreted rabbit runs, unseeing, in a darkening mist of fear.

And for him that mist closed into sudden and everlasting night. A third shot rang

Digitized by Google

out snappingly. The runner pitched forward, rolled from one boulder to another, hung for a breath-taking instant on the edge of stone, and then fell inertly down the twenty-foot drop. His body lay transversely filling the space between line and line.

KATRINE gave a little cry. Gresham stood up, silent except for one startled exclamation as the man fell, his eyes questioning his courier and Thring.

The former was the first to speak. "A mishap, signor," he said quietly. "We must await our explanations."

The little band of pursuers appeared, looked down with imperturbable and satisfied eyes, sought, and found, a path. A couple of them leaned down, searched the face of the dead, and drew the body slowly aside into the ditch that bordered the ballast. The next moment they were at the trolley's side. It was an appreciable moment before Gresham's surprise found vent in words.

"You—killed him?" he cried to Jovan, amazement and accusation contending in his tones. "He's—dead?"

"To Allah be praise!" aspired the foreman piously. "There was no room to miss, signor—as *he* missed. Another five yards and we should have been, all of us, what he is—carrion."

Gresham's hands went up in an incredulous gesture. "He tried to overwhelm us—wilfully?" he asked. "It was no—accident? He attempted—murder?"

The Albanian laughed grimly. "Did not the signor see?" he demanded. "The fellow tried—and failed. Will the signorina condescend to alight while we lift this car over the obstruction? It is a matter of a minute only."

His matter-of-factness seemed to be a barrier which their amazement could not pierce. He refused to be anything but imperturbable while he and his men raised and carried the trolley forward the few yards necessary, rearranged the luggage, and deferentially motioned the passengers to take their places. The journey had been resumed, indeed, before he allowed himself any further comment.

"We will proceed with caution, signors," he said pleasantly, "but we may take it that there can be little more to fear. Another couple of kilometers and we are in Vodra. And between this and that is not so much cover as would conceal a mouse." He laughed again, amiably, as a cicerone laughs over some stale incident of the road which, for his patrons, has all the savor of freshness. Then carefully he released the brakes and let the wheels revolve down the long incline.

And Katrine? The incident had struck her with stunning force, not, perhaps so much by its suddenness, its tragedy, or its overwhelming unaccustomedness, as by its relation to herself as a woman. It was this point of view which had seized upon her intelligence instinctively. She had come out of the world feminine into the world of action where men, and surely men only, could confront such possibilities of life—and of death. Had she a place in such a world? Had she a welcome? The thought was new, raw, disturbing. Her plan, which had brought her across the world to find, or to recover, what Fate had robbed her of? Was there room on this new plane of stress and toil for what she sought?

What did she seek?

For the first time introspection told her bluntly. Agnew—and Agnew's affection. Her premonitions had been nebulous so far. Undefined though it was, she had known what goal lay before her, but the road that led to it had gained no part of her attention. And now? Would there be, after all, obstacles? Was this, in fact, an utterly new world into which she had ventured, where work and peril and even death left no empty stage for the mere satisfaction of a single woman's desire? Men? They were everywhere. Women—or women of her own class? Possibly there was not another within a hundred miles! A panic sense of loneliness suddenly seized her. To what had she come—to what unprobed barriers in a path on which heretofore barriers were unknown?

"THE trolley rounded a corner. A furlong away the red glare of torches lit a ring of dwellings around a square of flattened mud. The car slid easily, rapidly down into the circle of the light. With a grinding noise the brakes came on. The flames wavered and muttered in the evening breeze. A couple of figures came forward as the trolley halted. Her heart gave an odd leap as she recog-

Digitized by Google

nized the leading one. She pronounced his name.

Agnew started. His hand went up to his eyes in a queer gesture as if he expected the incredible to become normal by help of his shading hand. He gave an incoherent exclamation.

She held out her hand.

He took it automatically, his amazement the one overmastering emotion. "You?" he wondered. "You?"

The tone stung her. There was no welcome in it. There was surprise, there was, indeed, something which she told herself was resentment. A shiver of disappointment shook her, though her intelligence was less wounded than her heart. He still believed her to be—what she had been in Netteville. Till that shadow was cleared away his attitude was unforgiving, as was natural. She must come out into the light of explanation. Her lips parted—and suddenly closed again.

That second figure had come within the range of her vision. The glow of the torches was illuminating Lucia Gessi's face.

All the warm beauty of her glorious coloring was enhanced by the red light against the star-lit background of the night. She stood erect, arrogant, at Agnew's side, her eyes fixed inquiringly on Katrine.

So the two confronted each other, the one fair, white-browed, Anglo-Saxon in type and mien; the other the warm-blooded Latin incarnate. And between them Agnew stood—inarticulate.

The American girl broke the silence. "You will introduce me, Mr. Agnew, to your friend?"

Agnew turned and looked at Lucia. And she looked back—*possessively*, as Thorpe Gresham's daughter told herself with a proud quickening of her heritage of Thorpe Gresham's blood. The Canadian spoke quickly in Italian.

"This is the Signor Proprietor's lady daughter whom I have the privilege of presenting to Signorina Lucia Gessi."

Katrine held out her hand. The other slipped her fingers into it slowly, hesitantly, with a queer, upward, inquiring glance—at Agnew.

"At your service, signorina," she said haughtily. "At your service!" and then with a sudden cat-like motion withdrew from the torch-lit circle into the dusk of the Southern night.

CHAPTER XIII

KATRINE THROWS AWAY HER GLOVE

"GOOD morning, signorina! The signorina understands my poor Italian?"

Katrine smiled. "My own is of the poorest," she explained. "You must help me to improve it, Signor Vaco."

Jovan held up his hands in exaggerated deprecation. "I to teach! I who have nothing that could be called an education!"

"My meaning is the universal meaning," said Katrine. "To get knowledge is to be educating oneself. Tell me what you know, signor."

"What I know of—what?" asked the Albanian, with a fine air of humility. "Of road work, of engineering, I who am a simple foreman of track-layers?"

"What you know of—the road," said Katrine. "Since the beginning of the work you have been here, they tell me. My father's name and honor is bound up in it—to my thinking the honor of my nation is somehow involved. Why, to begin with, has work on the first twenty sections ceased?"

The Albanian looked down at the girl with keen, appraising eyes. She had found them upon her at frequent intervals and with the same intensity during the four hours' journey of the previous afternoon. Her attention had been elsewhere at the time. Now remembrance brought it to her mind with clearness. She was of a more than passing interest to this man. To him, apparently, she concealed some significance which was hidden even from herself.

"Is there no answer?" she said lightly, after a moment's silence.

Jovan made a startled and apologetic gesture.

"You must forgive my uncouthness, signorina," he pleaded. "The first few sections of the road? You saw, did you not, the barrier in our path? The Ravine of Slivnitz? We have awaited your Signor Father's coming to deal with that question."

"That I understood. The road has to suffer a deviation, has it not? Why has that not been begun?"

"What you speak of so lightly, signorina, implies a tunnel through the very heart of the hill. That had no part in Signor Sanders' original scheme."

Digitized by Google

"And that was——?"

"Allah knows, signorina—Allah and, in my humble opinion, two beside. But none of the three has vouchsafed us the information."

"And the two in the confidence of the Almighty, who are they?" she asked.

He did not answer for the moment. He looked carefully about him. No one was apparently within earshot. The clatter of bowls and spoons echoed from the barracks where the workers were at their morning meal of *polenta*. The sunshine poured graciously upon the lake and lit the haze-girt foundations of the hills. Above the line of morning mist the snow caps of the inland ranges sparkled in their mantling of white.

He indicated them with a motion of his lithe fingers.

"A captivating view, signorina," he said, and made a half pace in the direction of the water-side. He seemed suddenly to have acquired all the airs and graces of a professional cicerone. He pointed to a leaping fish; he drew attention to the song of the frogs.

Katrine understood. She paced slowly toward the lake, with the patronizing aspect of a tourist. She feigned an interest in fish and frogs. Among the huts were possible listeners—she felt and obeyed the Albanian's unuttered suggestion by instinct. They halted at the extreme end of the embankment.

"ON ARRIVAL last night the signorina saw, in the company of the Signor Intendente, a woman?" observed Jovan without preamble.

A flush rose to Katrine's face. "Yes," she said quietly.

Jovan hesitated. "You will endeavor to forgive the garrulity of an old man who has a great matter warmly at heart, signorina," he went on at last. "If I speak of matters that hold no interest for you, stop me. You will, perhaps, give me your promise that, whether they lie within your interest or not, you will mention them to no one, not even to the Signor Proprietor, your father."

She nodded. "Yes," she said again.

"That woman had the Signor Sanders enmeshed," said the Albanian. "He was, throughout the last month of his life, her constant admirer and attendant. Do you follow me, signorina?"

"She appears to exercise her privileges in perpetuity," said Katrine. "Signor Agnew has taken over Signor Sanders' interest here in more ways than one? Is that what you wish to tell me?"

His face was alert; his eyes sparkled with satisfaction.

"No, signorina. But it pleases me that you, who knew Signor Agnew formerly, as I am told, should see the situation thus. The Signor Agnew in your opinion, then, is the—the adorer of this person?"

Katrine found in his words no key to his contentment. She began to feel, as two months before Agnew had felt, the sense of mystery, of intrigue, which pervades all interests within the Balkan Peninsula.

"Signorina Gessi is of great beauty," she temporized. "But I have had, of course, no opportunity of seeing Signor Agnew's attentions to her."

"In the day-time his work claims him utterly," explained the Albanian. "But every evening, of late, he has saved an hour from his constant occupations for her company."

"Ah," said Katrine coldly. To her own mind there was perfect restraint and perfect indifference in her tones. But Jovan, the twice married, felt a mental elation. "Allah be praised! The seeds of jealousy are there!" he told himself. "Let us irrigate—let us fertilize to the sprouting!"

"I have known the Signor Agnew for only two months," said Jovan. "I am presuming, you will think, in judging his temperament. But I will say definitely that he has little aptitude for intrigue. He fulfils his mission, I fear—or fails to fulfil it—with a distressing lack of finish."

She lifted her eyes with inquiry in them. The Albanian smiled.

"His mission?" she repeated. "His mission?"

"He undertook it, I have reason to think, at my recommendation, signorina. It is to win the love—no, I will not profane that sacred name—to win the passion of this girl, and so, to win her secret." He opened his palms and spread abroad his hands with the air of one who has made everything clear. "The situation is absolutely transparent, is it not?" he asked with innocent directness.

Katrine smiled—a very unconvincing smile. "Not entirely—to me," she answered. "You regard this attachment of

Digitized by Google

Signor Agnew's as one of business absolutely?"

"You think otherwise?" asked the Albanian with feigned anxiety.

"It would be a poor compliment to Signorina Gessi's attractions if I did not," said Katrine. "Do you wish me to think of him as enduring *hardships* in this—this intrigue?" There was the ring of scorn in her voice.

The Albanian looked concerned. "They are seductive—these charms of hers," he allowed. "It would, of course, be deplorable if Signor Agnew, in serving your Signor Father, allowed himself to be carried away by them. I must watch, signorina. It would be a thing too grave to bear thinking of if another fell as Signor Sanders fell. Our chief must be saved from *that!*"

He saw the light of a new and illuminating emotion in her face. He gave himself a little mental pat of self-congratulation. "The leaven works," he told himself. "Before long I shall be carrying the loaves to the baking."

"You are seeking my help in—what?" she asked with sudden directness.

"In watching," he said. "Matters are thus, signorina. This woman holds, I am assured, knowledge that we must have. At much personal risk Signor Agnew is endeavoring to obtain it. He is fighting, and his foe is a woman. Bring him your aid."

She shook her head. "I do not understand you," she said. "No, I can not see how I am to assist."

HE SIGHED. There was weariness in the sigh—the patience felt by a brilliant teacher confronted by the stupidities of a particularly dull scholar. Or so, at least, Katrine chose to interpret it.

"The Signorina Gessi," said Jovan, "regards the Signor Agnew as her property. She thus regards any man on whom she sets her interest. He is fighting against the blank wall of her impregnable self-esteem. Although she does not possess, as she means to possess, his passion, his soul, she regards them as already within her reach. She sees no necessity to offer an exceptional return for them."

"You must be explicit," she said quietly. "In our country women are not bred to intrigue. If you want my help you must tell me plainly how to give it."

"Signorina!" he said, almost incredulously. "Is it not plain? She sits, holding her secret, sure that Signor Agnew will give her eventually what he will not give—ever. And we, do you see, *wait—remain waiting!* She has to be aroused! Something must thrust her out of this complacency of hers, something must stir her passions, something must drill into her self-conceit the fact that the price of nothing is—nothing. She must be made to understand that the Signor Agnew is *not* hers for the asking!"

"Surely the Signor Agnew himself can make that clear?"

He sighed again. "You forget, signorina," he said stoically, "that he is a—man."

She smiled. "I had observed it," she said dryly. "Proceed."

"In his direct, manly way he will probe for his secret, giving her, in semblance though not in reality, attentions which he hopes she will repay by her confidence. That is a train of thought which you, signorina, know contains the very core of fatuity. When has a woman paid for goods already delivered? The unattainable! That is what we must set within her desires!"

The smile had left her face. He watched her anxiously. For a moment she did not speak, and then her comment, except in its intonation, told little.

"Ah," she said. "Your opinion of women is a low one, Signor Vaco."

He made a gesture of protest. "Of women—no, signorina!" he cried energetically. "Of this one? That is a totally different matter. One emotion and one alone will goad her now. And that is—jealousy. There, I have put my whole sermon into a word. If she thinks that her possession is slipping from her, then, signorina, she will strive with all her strength to take it back into her keeping. And the price? None will be too high. Of that be assured."

A faint flush rose to her temple. Here, in this medieval land of uncurbed passions she was asked to set back the clock of convention whole centuries! Bluntly, she was to enter an arena of public interest and contend against the elemental passions of this virago for—a man. She felt a tiny shudder quicken through her veins. Could she do this, even here, where none of her own breeding were present to criticize or misjudge? Could she act in this drama—could she feign primeval womanliness for even so great a thing as the road?

Digitized by Google

In silence she lifted her eyes, and the Albanian, as he read them, sighed. "No," he told himself, "this tool has broken in the tempering. Here my conceit of woman-craft gets a set-back. I fail—I fail!"

And then, still watching her, his dying hopes suddenly revived. A new expression illumined her gaze which was directed toward the camp. He wheeled to follow it.

AGNEW had come out into the open square. He stood, erect, square-shouldered, eyeing the water-level upon the embankment with frowning, dissatisfied eyes. There was an aspect about him that spoke of infinite resolution, dogged determination, but tinged with weariness. He towered above the squat Italian laborers who were filing back to their work. Amid them he was isolated, alone.

Something gripped at Katrine's heart. No, for the road she could not go through this humbling dissimulation. But—for Agnew?

The emotions she had suffered through the last three weeks became poignant in her mind. Remorse, anxiety, disesteem of herself and the self-centered carelessness that had led to her losing what she had really prized only now that she saw it lost before her. And longing. This last—did she confess it, even to herself? Perhaps. Perhaps elemental things are not so far from the women and men of to-day as Katrine believed.

How else do you explain the light which shone suddenly in her eyes? Why did her muscles tighten upon the gloves in her hand and crush them? What brought about the unconscious gesture in which she jerked them from her, to fall with a tiny splash upon the surface of the lake?

Perhaps you think as Jovan thought, scrambling down the embankment to the rescue. "A broken tool!" he soliloquized. "Nay, its keenness, Allah be praised, will cut this knot for us as easily as I, in Allah's time, will sever the vital cord of the man who tied it! Azrael, if I am not hugely mistaken, made a blot in Gessi's book of destiny to-day!"

He bowed elaborately as he laid Katrine's property in her hands. "I fear the water may have injured them, signorina," he said solicitously. "How can that be remedied?"

She looked at them absently. She laughed—a queer little laugh. "I do not want them, signor," she said impulsively. "The instinct which flung them away was unconscious, but it was sound."

She raised her hand, and for the second time the tiny missile flew through the air. "There, they are gone for good," she said, and held her bare fingers gravely beneath the Albanian's inspection. "I shall have no further use for them—here."

CHAPTER XIV

AT JEKA

UIKO sat placidly in his deplorable boat, rolling a cigarette and watching a couple of lines that swung from the prow. Gugi, his underling, baled perfunctorily at frequent intervals with a wooden, tin-bound slipper that had evidently seen hard and incessant service. A furlong behind them the great rock walls which pedestalled the mountains of Antigno soared toward the blue. In front the narrow headland which divides the Jeka arm of the lake from the main body of the waters was green with underbrush and scattered spinnies of beech.

"Thanks be to the One God who has given as sunshine, food and tobacco!" he breathed. "Further thanks are His due for having invented foreigners of whom the American Intendente is a never-to-be-sufficiently-admired example!"

Gugi gaped as he laid down the slipper. He dreaded his employer's leisure. The toils of the morass were tedious, but they left Uiko, as well as himself, too fatigued for unnecessary exercise. But Uiko unfatigued was another matter. Sheitan found work for his idle hands in severely slippering his assistant. He did this, he explained, to further the youth's moral progress.

"How do you earn the Intendente's wages?" asked Gugi incautiously.

His employer frowned. "How they are educated now, these children of ours," he deplored, "that they thrust for place in the councils of their elders!"

With sound common-sense Gugi remained silent. But his master, in spite of his protestations, was in a communicative mood.

"Do not sulk, child of infinite dishonor!" he admonished the youth. "I am not a carpet that thou shouldest place disdainful feet upon me."

Digitized by Google

"There is a bite!" said Gugi mendaciously, but with a vivid desire to turn the conversation. He scrambled forward to pull at one of the lines.

Uiko waited till he was within reach and then gripped him by his abundant locks. "Untruthful one!" he cried, adding emphasis to each syllable with slaps. "There is no fish! But owing to thy carelessness the float has detached itself and is lost!"

Gugi wriggled. "No!" he squealed. "The float is there, but it is proceeding against the current! See that I am telling the truth!"

Uiko halted in the processes of discipline, and followed, with his glance, the direction of his prisoner's finger. He, too, gaped—but with astonishment.

"This is the work of *djinns!*" he murmured incredulously.

"Why not of a fish?" protested Gugi, but was dismissed from custody with a final slap.

"Do I fish, or do I desire to seem to fish?" demanded Uiko. "I did not so much as trouble to bait the line. In the Jeka arm nothing swims save frogs—of that we are all well aware. Look, ignorant one!" He hauled up the hook and showed its bareness.

He cast it from him. The float splashed in the water and then sailed gaily off at full speed, bringing up with a jerk as the full length of its tether was reached. Uiko shrugged his shoulders magnificently.

"The current is setting *up* this portion of the lake!" he cried. "Yet the waterfall at the end empties the river *down* it! And you dare to controvert my testimony that this is the work of evil fiends?"

Gugi became a spiritualist on the spot.

"It is brought about by an *afreet!*" he agreed hastily. "It would be sound policy to depart."

Uiko prodded him with an oar. "Oh, coward! Oh, valorless one!" he retorted. "Haul in the anchor!"

Gugi whimpered. "There are demons in this Jeka arm who suck one down to Jehannum!" he averred. "Many times have I heard of them."

Uiko thrust at him remorselessly. "The anchor, eater of pigs' flesh!" he thundered. "Or thou wilt go to find thy demons instantly!"

Gugi leaned over the thwart and tugged unwillingly at the rope. Uiko gave him a prod too much. Gugi yelled and overbalanced. Uiko made a thoughtless step forward to grab at him. The whole weight of both bodies forced down the already overloaded thwart. The next instant master and pupil were both in the water.

UIKO called down the maledictions of High Heaven and all the notabilities of Islam upon the devoted head of his assistant. Swimming strongly, he struck out in the direction of the still anchored boat. He found himself in the grip of a force stronger than he. The current was about him with a persistency and strength which he quickly gauged as beyond his powers. He could scarcely maintain his position against it. To advance was plainly out of the question. With Oriental fatalism he gave up the struggle and turned his face toward the shore. Gugi's mop head, brown and stringy as an over-ripe coconut, preceded him by fifty yards or more. The two swimmers were drawn shorewards at a speed of ten good English miles per hour.

A curious moaning sound tingled through the air—a curious thrill seemed to throb through the water. Uiko's bravado dropped away from him upon the instant. Every legend of the *djinn*-haunted waters in which he swam crowded his repentant soul. He bawled his penitence aloud; he swam with huge, fear-goaded strokes to overtake Gugi. Company, if only that of an irrational and mud-created bratling, appeared to him as the one thing eminently desirable. He bore down upon the boy like a cruiser overtaking a fishing-ketch.

A second time the curious, quivering note throbbed across the water and died into the echoes of the hill. This time Gugi answered it with a squall of abject terror. Accustomed swimmer though he was, he beat upon the surface like a puppy flung in for drowning. He splashed and tumbled aimlessly. It was, indeed, only the strength of the newly created tide that bore him along to safety in despite of his own efforts at destruction. He and Uiko were thrust, a minute later, straight against the teeth of a half submerged reef. They grabbed it with infinite thankfulness and relief.

Uiko shook the water from his eyes and glared at his surroundings. The most arresting sight was the water itself. It was swirling past like a mill-race—as if, at the

Digitized by Google

head of the little fiord, a huge waste-pipe had been opened to drain the lake dry.

But a new phenomenon turned the watchers' attention. There was a roar like thunder and then a huge mass of earth and rock slid from the slope of the overhanging hill and poured across the intervening acres of grass-land into the blue depths. A great line of foam leaped away from the point of impact and charged across the surface. As its strength met the strength of the new-made current a wall of contending waters sprang into the air, tide contending with tide. Their forces died against each other. The foam sank back into the calm; the swirling torrent ceased to flow. Streaky, mud-tainted circles widened from shore to shore, but otherwise the lake regained its former aspect of placidity. The *afreet's* anger, so Gugi ingenuously opined, was appeased.

"Dolt!" snapped his master and cuffed him heartily. The remembrance of his own pusillanimous invocations still rang in Uiko's ears and made his pulses tingle with shame. There had been nothing more singular than a land-slide—the rocks had been unseated both above and below the surface of the lake. This was a thing not frequent, but, at the same time, to a less extent not uncommon. And he, Uiko the fisherman, had whimpered like a lost goat's kid in the fear of immediate death!

"Return immediately to the boat which your worthlessness has come near to wrecking!" cried Uiko, adding blow to blow. "Swim out and get aboard and bring it here to me. Be thankful I permit you to continue existing after such imbecility!"

"I shall be sucked down by monsters!" squalled Gugi. "I would rather await your cruelties on shore!"

During the next thirty seconds the flat of Uiko's hand came into action at a miraculous rate of speed. On the one side discipline was finely developed; on the other discord hideously evolved. Discipline won—with ease. Gugi expressed an earnest wish to be allowed to engage in further natatory exercises, and, after voluminous recriminations, was allowed to depart.

"Bring the boat to the shore! I will not risk your mishandling of her amid these rocks!" said Uiko, and turned to wade majestically from stone to stone. He looked at the ruined acres of green. A sudden careless inclination to view the scene of the disaster from closer quarters sent him strolling along the pebbles.

Between him and the scene of the disaster was a little spinney of beech. He fought a way between the tangled boughs and was on the point of emerging on the far side when his eyes encountered a moving object. A man had appeared from the direction of the village of Jeka. He came into view suddenly over the shoulder of the hill. He was followed by another and by a third. Uiko's keen glance recognized uniforms.

"*Zaptiehs!*" soliloquized the fishermen pessimistically. He hesitated. Uiko's collisions with authority had been numerous. He saw no reason to add to them. Experience had taught him that encounters with men of the *zaptieh* class were likely to result in, at any rate, differences of opinion. He made a gesture of resignation and turned back to the other side of the spinney. Gugi was in the act of thankfully boarding the boat. Out of sight of the newcomers, Uiko gesticulated to him wildly to remain where he was.

This matter being settled, the fisherman returned cautiously whence he had come, and, sheltered by the undergrowth and a large boulder, prepared to observe and contemn the actions of his natural enemies.

"Eaters of dirt!" he muttered as they approached. "How many hundreds of cartridges could I not have smuggled across the border while they are wasting their powers over a heap of earth and stones!" He spat disdainfully.

THE three halted beside the path of the landslide, and then, following a motion of their leader's hand, climbed across it. They followed it to the water's edge. They stood in line upon a natural wharf of stone and observed the surface keenly. They were within forty yards of Uiko's ambush, and forty yards to a hillman means earshot. He could hear their conversation distinctly.

"Something more than the old opening must have gaped," said one, who bore a corporal's chevron on his sleeve. "It must have gaped and then the landslide closed it. That is easily seen to be the explanation. When the water began to rush away from the land I thought that the lake would dry utterly from before us!"

"It only flowed down the fiord for three minutes or less," agreed another. "But in

Digitized by Google

Allah's Name, at what a pace! Had our blasting operations of a week back anything to do with this, think you?"

The corporal shrugged his shoulders. "Allah knows!" he answered. "But this I do know: that if the old road of the waters had been opened—and opened twenty times as wide as before, as seemed likely—the Bey's purpose would have been utterly defeated. Even now he will be little pleased. Some water emerges, yet there is a current still, if only a slight one."

In his lair Uiko lowered his head cautiously and peered at the surface. Yes, there was still some slight movement up the fiord. He nodded his head thoughtfully.

"If this is not information for which the Signor Intendente will offer gold, then I am of a very mean intelligence!" he told himself. "I begin to think that this Esuli Bey is a man of astounding devices. And why should he wish to alter the level of our lake? Why?"

Chance supplied the explanation on the spot.

"There is truly some little escape," said the third *zaptieh*, who had been silent so far, "but less than before our original operations. The lake will continue to rise, if slowly. It will still threaten the new-made embankment, and the gap between the two ends of it, which the bridge is to span, will have to be widened. That, so his Excellency appears to think, will be impossible for a one-span bridge. There will have to be two spans. When they come to build their foundations for the central support, they will discover the depth, not only of the river, but of the mud-banks below it. And then,"— he broke off with a shrug — "may Allah give them patience to meet His Will!" he grinned.

The other two nodded.

"They must have energy and gold to spare, these American unbelievers," said the corporal. "But in the Name of God, they have little sense! They build confidently up to the ravine of Slivnitz and can not cross it. They fling out embankments in the morass of Vodra and can not link them together. Well, the ruin of their purposes will leave a pleasant salve of money behind it. They have found employment for thousands of these peasants."

"At double wages, too," scoffed the first speaker. "That witless dog who has anchored his fishing-boat where from year's end to year's end scarcely a fish is seen to swim—what sort of livelihood does he drag from the lake and marshes? Thirty *piastres* in a week—not a *para* more, if I know aught of his trade. Now on the embankment and track are men of no more wit than he, getting their ten *piastres* daily!"

Uiko ground his teeth.

"Witless dog that I am, O friend," he muttered, "thou hast provided me with more than a full week's wages already. And the wit that leads you to talk thus loudly within my earshot may fail you yet. It is to you and your master, then, that we owe this mystery of our lake? We shall see, my beautiful pigeons—perhaps we shall have a word to say yet!"

The corporal lifted his shoulders in another shrug.

"There should be something of the golden harvest recoverable in the taxes," he said optimistically. "Already our Bey speaks of a higher impost. Perhaps he desires a better Valiship than this—one fit for his special talents." He turned in the direction of the village. "At any rate we may report to him that there is no harm, thanks to God," he added. "And if matters *had* gone awry, dynamite is cheap. We could have blown down a further supply of rock upon the channel. Let us take ourselves to the village again."

They followed him. The third man smiled as he did so.

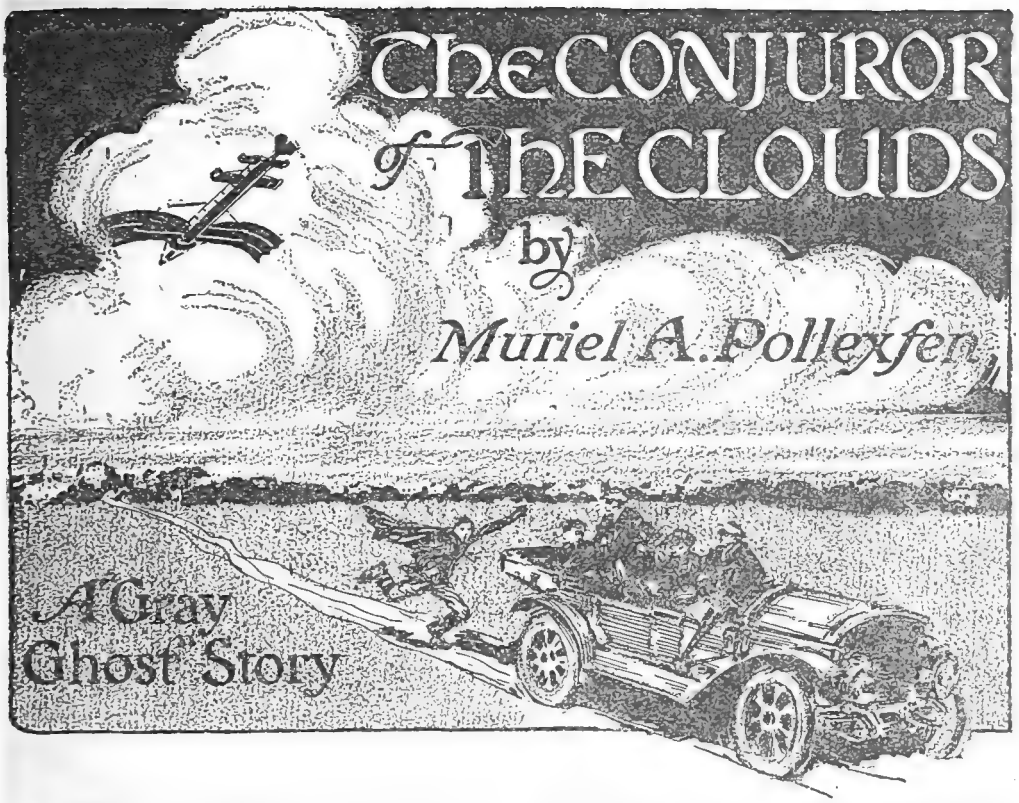
"You speak of a higher post for our master," Uiko heard him say as the three passed out of earshot. "Be assured that while he sits *where* he sits, with this road under his eye, there are few other offices better paid than that of Governor of the Jeka. Honor is not everything, friends. To a practical man gold takes precedence."

His comrades laughed as they clambered across the heaped earth of the landslide and continued placidly along the path to the village.

Among the beech boughs Uiko hugged himself in fervent self-congratulation.

TO BE CONTINUED

Digitized by Google



GRAY GHOST hung like a great shadow in the midst of the lumbering banks of storm-foretelling clouds—a vast shadow of luminous gray, her long, pointed nose thrust and smothered into a curling, encroaching cloud, her shining deck of steel looking like a pathway of bright light across the darker heavens.

The sun was at its zenith of early morning glory and shed a rosy brilliance on all the polished metals of the airship, on the innumerable levers, the countless buttons controlling unseen mechanism, making the narrow length of slippery deck appear a bar of glittering ore.

Gray Ghost! Alsopp Ostermann's wonderful airship *Gray Ghost!* A thing of magic, a thing of colossal power, a thing of menace and the powers of evil, but still a thing of perfect beauty and the perfect expression of a master mind!

No wonder the man himself thrilled to the very soul as he stepped up on deck from below and surveyed the work of his genius lying motionless as a resting bird upon a nest of white-tipped clouds. No wonder he cherished resentment against the airship's enemies and that black hatred filled his heart as he thought of the two men in the cabin below whom he had caused to be abducted the night before and whom he intended to murder in cold blood as soon as they recovered their senses from the effects of the drug which had been administered to them. Two men who had been *Gray Ghost's* most active and dangerous enemies and who had schemed and plotted and striven to trap him a dozen times and once or twice all but succeeded—perilously nearly succeeded!

Yes, Algy Brett and Sir Dean Densham had been the greatest source of danger and anxiety and even now Ostermann marveled how his luck had held so long against the success of their well-planned attempts to capture. Even now he shuddered to remember the narrowness of his escape from the house behind the boarding and the hut among the sandhills at Formby; and, even as he remembered, his teeth gritted together in impotent rage at the failure of the schemes which should have, by this time, made him the most powerful man on earth.

Digitized by Google

"But I've got them now!" he muttered grimly, his green coyote's eyes bulging from their colorless lids in triumph, a cruel, gloating, unholy joy of anticipation twisting and curling his thin, sucked-in lips. "I've got them now and this time they shall not escape me! This time *I* triumph; this time *I* call the tune for them to dance to! I've got them safe—roped hand and foot in the cabin there, and to-day I'll reward them for their vigilance!"

Ostermann laughed as he glanced backward over his shoulder at the steps which led to the interior of the airship and thought of the two poor men who would wake presently to the horrible reality that they were prisoners in their enemy's grip.

He went forward to a solitary figure stationed in the narrow bows.

"Gherston," he said abruptly, as the man turned and saluted, "I am going up to the wireless platfrom and I want you to go down every now and then and report to me how the prisoners are. The moment they are conscious I want them brought to me. Understand?"

"Quite, sir. Shall I call Andersen forward to take my watch and go below and keep constant guard? It would be unfortunate if one or both of them contrived to cut their bonds and escape."

Ostermann showed his yellow teeth in a snarling grin.

"Unfortunate? Unfortunate for the man who lets them get free! But as to escape—how could they? The only thing they could do would be to fling themselves overboard and rob us of the pleasure of doing it for them. And that, Gherston, would annoy me very much! I want to gloat over the suffering, mental and physical, they will endure when they hear the fate I have mapped out for them! It makes it sweeter to know that they will realize it all the better for having witnessed Carlile Darien's death. And that reminds me. When the time comes to treat Mr. Brett and Sir Dean Densham in the same manner as we treated Mr. Darien, see to it that they are searched thoroughly before being thrown overboard. Remember what disaster overtook us because we forgot the simple operation on that other occasion! Remember the betrayal of the 'seeds of destruction' episode and see to it that our great plans for next week are not frustrated through the agency of a scrap of paper. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. And what about Andersen?"

"Yes, send for Andersen, but not immediately. Until they recover from the drugs the prisoners are safe enough and Andersen did some hard work last night. Better keep on with your watch forward and go down every ten minutes. First of all see to it that their bonds are firm; no chance of working loose. I don't think there is, but still—I'm taking *no* chances this time."

"Good. I'll go down at once. By the way, Stoltz told me to tell you that he's got No. 3 motor running again—it was a clog of oil. He says he's ready to start at a second's notice."

"Ah, that's good hearing. Tell him to see to the others also while he has the chance. I want everything fit for this afternoon. Tell him we start about ten o'clock."

OSTERMANN turned away and mounted to the little platform where the wireless apparatus was fitted. He was some time getting an answer to his repeated calling, but at length it came, the electric flashes illuminating the tiny box-like house. "Yes, we are the *Pratzlau* wireless; who are you? Ostermann? Good. We've been wanting to get hold of you and have been trying for some hours. Have you any news?"

"Yes," flashed back Ostermann. "We have succeeded in getting Brett and Sir Dean and they are prisoners here on the airship. They are insensible at the present moment, but I intend putting a stop to their interfering powers the instant they are reported conscious. Even as it is, they have done harm to us. They have succeeded in rousing up the War Office and the Heads generally and if I didn't have *Gray Ghost*, I should be sure to be captured before many hours had passed. As it is, however, I can afford to laugh at them. They have sent aeroplanes and balloons after me, scouring the skies for me, but they might as well save themselves the bother. They won't catch me that way! Any orders?"

"Yes. The Emperor Maximilian is anxious to come over and see you himself—and to see how the scheme is progressing, and whether everything is really as far on as you say. He intends leaving in his yacht this evening and would arrive at the cove about midnight to-morrow. Suit you?"

"Very well indeed. I will alter my plans accordingly. Anything else? Does he

Digitized by Google

approve of what I intend doing to Brett and Densham?"

"Heartily. They were the mainspring of every failure we endured. In fact I believe he would not mind giving them a helping hand to send them quicker on their way! Anyway, I hope we'll have a turn of luck now, eh? You deserve it anyway!"

"I think I do! I want to touch some of those two millions! Good-by."

"Good-by. Remember, twelve midnight, the cove, to-morrow! And, by the way, we shall want a chart of the entrance to the cove—will you send it to Berwick?"

The flashes and mutterings ceased and Ostermann descended once again to the deck.

Gherston was coming up the ladder from the cabin at the same moment and, saluting in military fashion, stepped up to him.

"I have just been down, sir. The prisoners are still unconscious and show no sign of coming round. The elder one is breathing strangely and looks ill. I moved him to the couch and made him a bit more comfortable as I did not think you wanted him to slip out of your hands."

"Quite right, Gherston," replied Ostermann grimly, sucking in his lip over his teeth as was his fashion when feeling annoyed. "Quite right. I don't want him to slip through my hands *that way!* Is the young one all right?"

"Oh, yes, quite. I left him where he was under the table. He's screwed up pretty tight, so even if he does come round he can't move a hair!"

"Quite sure they're still safely under the influence? I want you to send Lieutenant Berne to me in the cabin, but I want to be very sure those two won't overhear our conversation."

"Oh, I'm sure they're dead unconscious —both of them. I took jolly good care to find out if they were fooling, I can tell you. Besides, even if they do hear a bit it won't do them any good or you any harm, considering they are on the verge of being jettisoned! Eh, Captain?"

"Quite so, Gherston. I'm hanged if I hadn't almost forgotten that. I'm so accustomed to that young Brett worming and twisting himself into my innermost secrets that I believe I'm frightened of him even now when he's trussed and roped and within a few minutes of death! After all, it might be only making the pill a little more bitter if he did happen to overhear us! So send along Lieutenant Berne and you continue your watch. If you see anything of that flying-man Denton just direct the projector at him and send him a present of a bomb to teach him sense! Not that I expect him, but they say he's scouring the clouds for us on the occasions he manages by some fluke to leave the ground, and it would liven things up a bit in the intervals if we could come to close quarters with another airship."

"There's only *one* airship worth talking about, Captain, and I'm happy to have the honor to belong to her! There's only one *Gray Ghost!*"

Ostermann looked at his junior navigating lieutenant with a gleam like a laugh in his prominent green eyes.

"Only one *Gray Ghost at present!*" he said enigmatically. "For the others you must wait and see, Gherston! You won't have long—only till next week, I think; only till next week, if all goes well! And now send Berne to me."

II

ALGY BRETT stirred uneasily and breathed hard, and at the same moment was conscious of wonderment as to the reason of the cramped stiffness in his chest and arms and the gnawing pains that seemed to be eating into the very bones of his legs.

He tried to sit up, but a suffocating something prevented, and his head fell back heavily on to a hard floor, while the things eating into his muscles hurt more than ever with the slight movement. An intense feeling of sickness overwhelmed him and the faint beating of his heart made him wonder whether he had been ill. A cloud wrapped his brain in shadows and he could remember nothing; he even failed to understand what had happened or to realize that anything at all had happened. Overcome by the effort to sit up, he almost went back into unconsciousness, and it was fortunate that it was the very moment Gherston had come down to inspect them. A second sooner and he would have had to report that Brett had come to. As it was, he applied the test of touching the eyeball with a finger-tip, and went up to Ostermann quite satisfied that both the prisoners were still deeply drugged and, to all intents and purposes, dead to the world.

Digitized by Google

But the second time that Algy opened his eyes the cloud had almost gone from his brain and a wave of memory rushed over him.

He remembered everything! Everything, and a bitter nausea welled up in his heart. He had gone to his uncle's house in Whitehall the night before in response to a telegram signed "Densham" and addressed to him at Liss. He recalled clearly the sudden feeling of dread and the touch of warning that seemed to stay him as he entered the big library where he expected his uncle to meet him. He recalled the sensation of fear that gripped him as he viewed the empty room and realized the open window, the heavy velvet curtain torn almost from the pole and dragged outward over the balcony as though a man fighting for life had clung to it in desperation; recalled the cry he strove in vain to stifle as he rushed like a reckless boy to the window, ran, ruthless of the consequences, on to the iron balcony where, hovering above, a dim shape swayed and balanced—*Gray Ghost!* He remembered the two words passing his terrified lips, "*Gray Ghost!*" and then a hand that seemed to materialize from the darkness of the balcony corner, a grip of iron fingers on his throat choking his cry for help, a sponge saturated with chloroform pressed over his mouth and nose, and then nothing—nothing—nothing till this moment!

He turned his aching eyes stiffly in their sockets and saw his uncle stretched out on the narrow bench that circled the tiny room. Was he already dead? Had death mercifully come to him while still unconscious? Or was he still drugged? Even so, that was better than the bitterness of consciousness and helplessness, waiting, waiting, waiting for the end! He thought of poor Darien and shuddered. Was his fate to be the same—smashed to an unrecognizable pulp on the stones of the streets? Again he strained his eyes in the direction of Sir Dean's body and again he hoped and prayed that all was well with the old man.

"Ostermann's got us this time!" he murmured inwardly, closing his eyes again that the tears of sheer weakness he felt rising to them would not brim over and betray his terror. If Ostermann was to gloat over their murders presently he should not also gloat over their cowardice. "He's got us this time and I suppose we ought to think ourselves lucky to have escaped his talons for so long. But if only I could have hounded him down first I could have borne this better!

"If only England believed in *Gray Ghost!* But after this perhaps they will—if it's not too late. The scarifice of Darien was too unimportant for them to attach a meaning to it; perhaps the sacrifice of Sir Dean Densham will wake them up. But at what a cost! Poor Uncle Dean! I'd give my right hand to save you. I'd die a dozen times if it would avail you anything. But I know Ostermann too well. He wants his pound of flesh and I go to make up the weight!"

Footsteps sounded on the deck above, metallic and echoing. They came nearer and nearer and Brett realized that some one was entering the cabin—two people. From under his eyelids he saw that one was Ostermann, and the faintness of helplessness rushed over him once more as he recognized the tall thin body, the bulging, colorless eyes, shifty and restless and watchful as a prairie wolf's, and the narrow, cruel mouth sucked in over the teeth. The man stooped and looked at him, kicking him contemptuously, believing him still insensible.

"Andersen gave them a good dose while he was at it, I must say!" he said to the man following him. "But I suppose he was afraid of them escaping during my absence. The old fellow looks like lying there for good, eh? Presently I'll send him down a dose of brandy so as to hurry things up a bit. I don't want him dying quite so comfortably as all that! But first I want to settle definitely the arrangements for the next few hours.

"Listen. I've just been speaking to the *Pratzlau* station and from the tone of their messages I don't think they are very satisfied with me. These two meddlers here have interfered with me so often that they are beginning to lose confidence in me—and I don't know that I altogether blame them. I must admit it looks like bad management on my part to let my secret plans get abroad as they have done, and they think that I should have earned their offer and reward of two million before this. However, I told them I'd got my prisoners safe and that the future would be all plain sailing and that England could be theirs for the mere asking by this time next week!"

"I expect that will satisfy them."

"I expect it will, but all the same the

Digitized by Google

Emperor is making it his business to come to the cove to-morrow to see with his own eyes how I am obeying orders! It shows the way the wind is blowing, eh? Personal supervision, eh?"

"Phew! It seems to me as though we'd only got those two chaps there in the nick of time! Another failure and we'd have been given the cold shoulder! And now what's to be done?"

"Our arrangements will have to be altered. He will arrive at the cove to-morrow night at midnight; he is coming over in his yacht and I shall have to be there to meet him and make him realize how ready everything is for the projected invasion next week. *We are ready*, Berne, and he must admit we have done our work well when he sees for himself the preparations."

"He will be a stoic if he can look on the result of the last two months' work and not realize and pay homage to your genius, Captain! Whatever have been our failures lately, they will be compensated for in the moment when the Emperor enters the cove!"

"That moment will be one of the proudest in my life, Berne. And if, as you say, it will compensate for all my betrayals—why I almost find it in my heart to let those two fellows there live! Almost, but not quite, eh? Not quite, friend Brett! Not quite, friend Densham!"

"Indeed no; not unless we want to go on being made the laughing-stocks of the world! And now, sir, any orders for me?"

"Yes. They want the code-chart of the entrance to the cove. You will have to go to Phelps—there's the address, Carmichael Chambers, Jermyn Street. He is doing the plans for me; tell him they are to be sent immediately to Berwick, where they will be called for by the Emperor some time to-morrow afternoon. Tell him on no account to fail. You know the address in Berwick?"

"Yes, sir. And what time shall I go? Am I to go now?"

"Let me see!" Ostermann looked at a tiny indicator hanging on the wall and measured up the markings before he spoke again. "We are just about three thousand feet above Ilford. I think if we sail immediately over London, drop down to between one and two thousand feet and get rid of our cargo, then sail back to Aldershot or thereabouts to land you without attention being drawn to us, it would be the best plan. It won't do for you to be a marked man. Disguise as soon as possible and take the train to London the moment you are able to. You've plenty of time, so don't run the risk of bungling things for the sake of a few minutes. Remember they'll be on the lookout for us and beware."

Berne looked considerately at the figure of Sir Dean on the narrow seat and the portion of Brett's body sticking out from under the table over which Ostermann and he were talking.

"You don't think it might be more advisable to dump them down in some quieter place than the City of London, sir?" he asked, indicating the recumbent prisoners. "It's running a big risk, sir."

"A big risk, Berne, as you say. I admit it. But I've been waiting for this hour to come for months past and I'm not going to be balked of a single ounce of sweetness! I want London to ring with the news! I want Whitehall to witness the thing for themselves! I want to make England realize the strength of my power, the iron grip I've got them in, the kind of enemy I make! I want them to know me for what I am—the Conjuror of the Clouds! It's my rightful title and I'm proud of it! I want those pygmy Englishmen down there to call me by it and tremble before it!

"The Conjuror of the Clouds! I *am* a conjuror, Berne, and I'm going to make them know it and worship me! They'll call me murderer if they like, but they'll call me conjuror, too. And if they don't to-day, they will next week when the secret of the cove is visible and known to all the world. They've scoffed and jeered and sneered at me down there in Whitehall—when I was a struggling beginner, starving in brain and body for funds to carry out my great invention, they turned me from their doors and laughed at airships! Laughed at *Gray Ghost!* At me! To-day they'll begin to be sorry, they'll begin to realize their mistake, they'll begin to barter and haggle with me—not direct with me, because I'll be a murderer in their eyes, but through spies! Through spies like that dog Brett there!

"And by this time next week they'll be ready to fling every ounce of gold in their coffers at my feet for my secret! Too late, this time next week, too late! And that's why I want to publicly revenge myself on my prisoners even at the risk of your liberty. It's my revenge and I can't renounce a drop of it!"

Digitized by Google

"I won't ask you to, sir," replied Berne in a subdued voice, impressed by Ostermann's sudden baring of his feelings. "I'm not a bit anxious about myself—it was you and *Gray Ghost* I was thinking of. I'll be all right, never fear, sir."

"Thank you, Berne. You've stuck by me through thick and thin and I'll see your share of the two millions is a pretty good one in consequence. And now you'd better get to your bunk and prepare for the journey. Tell Gherston that the others need not be disturbed for another hour yet; they are sleeping like logs after yesterday's trip and last night's work—and no wonder. Three thousand miles—and some of it across a frozen continent—isn't bad work, eh? And then the capture of the two spies, eh? However, let them sleep on for a bit. I shall return here in fifteen minutes. Meet me here in that time, ready to start. If those two brutes have not come round by then, I'll wait no longer but heave them overboard as they are. It won't be sport, but they'll have to be got rid of within an hour if you're to be landed in time. Till fifteen minutes, then."

III

AS ALSOPP OSTERMANN'S footsteps died away and once again the little cabin was empty, Algy Brett ventured to stir slightly and gaze round. The stiffness was gone from his eyes and he was feeling alert and strong, with brain eager and active and all the nausea gone.

If only his hands and feet weren't tied so firmly! He wrenched his shoulders violently and tried vainly to burst the rope bound round his shoulders. The memory that in fifteen short and flying moments Ostermann would again enter that narrow, steel-walled chamber was like molten fire in his brain and stirred him up to wild endeavor. A frenzy of determination flooded him and he swore thickly to get free. A demon of strength seemed to come to him; an unnatural power swelled his muscles and made his fingers iron.

Like a man possessed, a man with the sinews of the Ancients, he wrenched and stretched and tore at the bonds that held him.

And at last they gave! His hands were free—swelled and bleeding and purple, but free. He felt in his coat and all but shouted with glee to find they had not searched him, that still his knife was there and his revolver. In two minutes he was rid of the last rope and staggered to his feet, drunk with the joy of freedom and the knowledge that at least he would not die trussed up like a pigeon! Let Ostermann come in now; let the airship's crew come in! They would not take him alive while there was a shot in the Colt!

He crept slowly to the bench where his uncle lay and stooped over him. Sir Dean was very white and very still and a look of perfect happiness had settled on his face. Algy put a trembling hand over his heart and bent his ear to the pale lips. Then he straightened himself suddenly and found himself praying.

Sir Dean had cheated Ostermann even of his revenge.

And then a step on the stair above warned Brett of the approach of some one and he sprang back behind the table, crouching down so that the newcomer would be absolutely in the cabin before he would notice that the prisoner had risen from the floor.

The man was Berne and he carried a valise in his hand as though prepared and ready for the immediate journey. He saw Brett the instant he entered the chamber, but astonishment robbed him for the moment of his senses, and before he recovered them and could call out for help, Algy had sprung upon him and stunned him with the butt-end of the Colt. As he fell he was dragged under the table and the rope flung over him; only his legs projected from the table, and a person looking into the cabin from the steps would be just able to see the protruding feet and satisfy himself that Brett was still safe and sound and helpless beneath the table.

A piece of thin steel wall, forming a lazarette, abutted from the main wall by the door and it made a screen serviceable enough for a man to hide behind. Algy squeezed in behind it and tried to think.

The only certain thing was that within a very few minutes Ostermann would be coming down into the cabin and the instant he stepped into it Algy would have to act. Could he trust his revolver again to be so clean and quick in its work as it had been with Berne? He was aware that his arm was stiff and shaking, and a fear that he might bungle filled him with nervousness. If there were only something else! Thank heaven there was! In the nick of time he

Digitized by Google

remembered it. Sir Dean always carried a bottle of a certain drug on him which he was in the habit of taking for a weak heart. The drug, Algy knew, would, if applied under the same conditions, act in the precise capacity of chloroform. A few drops inhaled from a handkerchief was enough to send a man into a state of unconsciousness lasting some considerable time.

With barely one minute to spare, Algy ran noiselessly across the cabin and felt for the bottle. In the inner pocket of the dead man's coat he found it and drew it out. It was quite a biggish bottle and was almost full. He slipped behind the screen again just in time. A tread sounded on the step of the dwarf companion-ladder and Ostermann's thin body came into view—Algy could see the feet first, long and narrow and shod in rubber overshoes; then the limp, lean, yellow fingers swinging aimlessly at his sides, then the gray, clay-colored face and virile, working mouth.

Algy could see that Ostermann's cold, hard eyes were fixed on Sir Dean's face almost as though the thought had struck him at last that perhaps, after all, the man had escaped him and was dead. He walked within an inch of Brett, but was so arrested by the conviction and fear that Sir Dean had checkmated him that he had thought for nothing else.

Even the strong and pungent odor of the drug poured out by Brett escaped him. Perhaps it was because the narrow cabin already reeked of chloroform that the new smell was unnoticed.

He had passed a yard in front of the screen when Algy leaped upon him like a panther of the forest leaping on his prey. The thick handkerchief, folded into a pad and saturated with the drug, was pressed over his nose with the same sudden gift of strength that had come to Algy when he struggled to be free from the ropes that bound him. Ostermann never even struggled. The drug overcame him almost the instant it was applied, Brett's powerful grip was an agony to endure, and, before Algy could bring himself to believe his senses, the man was stretched out limp and unconscious at his feet.

Scarcely crediting his luck, Algy slipped to the door and closed it. Then he made two thick pads from his own handkerchief and Ostermann's and strapped them tightly over his victims' mouths.

"That will ensure my safety till they are discovered, at least!" he muttered, giving Ostermann's pad a vicious thrust as he remembered the kick administered in a like temper upon himself. "And now to work! First, Mr. Ostermann, I want to borrow your cap. Thanks; and now your coat. Thank goodness, it's a fit and has a high collar. Now your goggles. What a fortunate thing it is you seem to be in the habit of wearing them! Now, am I ready?"

He paused a moment, thinking. Ostermann's cap, a close-fitting fur, covered his head and ears and proved an excellent concealment for his face. Ostermann's great coat of skin, with its high storm-collar, enveloped him in its generous folds, and Ostermann's gloves and shoes of rubber hid his hands and telltale feet.

Then, though adding by it to the risk of discovery by the delay of precious time, Algy went again to his uncle's side and with his knife freed the thin white hands and poor body from the indignity of a traitor's bonds.

UP ON DECK all was silent and peaceful. The clouds that had been threatening storm had passed over and now a thin haze, chilly and wet and enveloping, wrapped the airship in a shroud-like vapor.

Gherston, on the lookout in the narrow bows, could barely be observed and Brett's heart thrilled within him as he understood what the fog meant to him. It was as though a kind Providence had come to his aid, and he saw in the opportune, wraith-like mist a promise of victory and escape.

The grayness and the closeness of the encroaching clouds hid the beauty and power of the motionless ship from him, but he could see enough to admit himself afraid of the genius that had brought into being such a wondrous achievement; such a perfect machine; a thing almost rivaling the very birds of the air. No wonder the man called himself with such colossal pride the Conjuror of the Air! For so he was. He was something more than ordinary man. He was superman! He had the brain of a superman—and this was its product! The boy shivered even as he admired. For there was always about *Gray Ghost* that feeling of slumbering enmity, of hidden menace, of suggestive power to send down death and havoc and destruction. And now that it had claimed his uncle as another victim it

Digitized by Google

was more than ever a thing of evil and a vampire of steel.

Shuddering, devoured with the one idea of escaping from the feel of the thin steel decks and the presence of those silent propellers, Algy roused himself and walked along into the bows.

He touched Gherston on the shoulder. "Berne is going to land immediately. I want to go with him. You can see to the prisoners in my absence. Make for London —somewhere near Whitehall. Call me when I'm wanted."

Gherston wheeled round with a suddenness which betrayed his suspicions. He peered into Brett's face and his hand flew to his belt.

"You're not Ostermann!" he cried, fear touching him. "You're not the Captain!"

His fingers had fumbled for his revolver, but Brett was too quick for him. "No, I'm not," he said, his pistol at the other's head. "I'm not, but you've got to act as though I were! One move on your part is death. I mean it! I've killed, or almost killed, one man down there, and your precious master is as good as dead, and I'd as soon put a bullet through you as a rat. Now then, understand. I've got to land safely and you've got to see to it!"

Gherston was but a boy and the whip in Brett's voice was serious.

"I can not! They'd be suspicious—they'd spot you in a moment. I can not!"

"It was arranged for Lieutenant Berne to be landed and the same orders will do for me. See to it, or I'll treat you as I've treated them. Give the orders at once!"

Gherston, deadly white, struggling for self-possession but conscious of the pressure of the cold steel of the revolver against his cheek, picked up the tube of the telephone and called up the engineer.

"One false word—one word too much—one warning, and remember you are a dead man! Whatever happens to me, I'll see that you precede me. Remember that and play fair! Even if you cough I'll take it as the signal for me to pull this trigger. Now, then, fire away!"

IV

MOTIONLESS and silent in the shroud of mist and wrapping of crowding clouds, *Gray Ghost* still hovered, but a faint murmuring, a distant muttering was becoming louder and louder as every moment passed and Algy knew that the engineer had started the motors. Once again his heart began to cherish hope.

If Gherston had not played him false by mingling a code-warning into the brief orders he had telephoned down below then there was a chance! But there was also the risk that some one might enter the cabin! If they did, not all the bullets in the world could save him. He listened to the humming and the throbbing of the starting motors with an intensity which seemed to make the waiting drag like a hundred years.

Then the muttering became regular, the great propellers thrummed and sang and the banks of clouds seemed to sail past them, slowly at first, then faster and faster, till the wet mist drove like a sheet of solid rain against them and the cutting wind whistled and shrieked and yelled mocking, angry diatribes in their ears. Then a sudden dip, a sweeping, downward flight that sent Algy sick and helpless against the rail. And for this Gherston had been waiting. He sprang forward, revolver in hand and a half uttered shout on his lips. But Brett recovered instantly and with an oath he knocked the other's weapon from him over the side, down, down into the abyss of cloud below them.

"And you'll follow, you fool!" said he. "Send those fellows about their business or it will be the worse for you! Do you hear? Order that man back!"

At the sound of Gherston's half-articulated cry two men who had been working aft came running up, and if Gherston had valued his life a little less, Brett's chance of escape was gone for good. But Gherston was young and life was dear and Algy's eyes were red with passion. He waved the men away and strode to the far end of the little bridge spanning the deck, his face dark with ill-suppressed rage against the man who now so completely had the mastery over him; his cowardly brain trying desperately to think of some way of revenging himself and saving his master and at the same time running no serious risk of putting his own life in danger.

For the impostor was deadly in earnest; one had only to look at his set teeth and snapping, red-flushed eyes to know that. And it was one thing to be brave when armed and prepared, but quite another to have had one's revolver sent spinning overboard and to know that there was only

Digitized by Google

strategy left. So he remained sulking and silent in the corner and kept a watch on Brett's every movement like a cat waiting to pounce on a wary mouse.

The ship had dropped down to between one and two thousand feet and Algy could occasionally see the dotted villages and townships marking the earth below them when the fog lifted at intervals. He longed with wild intensity to be able to step over to the navigator in charge of the airship and order him to make the descent then and there regardless of locality, but it was certain that Ostermann must have mentioned that Berne was to be landed on the lonely plains around Aldershot, and not to do so would rouse suspicion. Therefore he would have to endure the suspense as best he could till the flat wastes of Laffans Plain appeared beneath them.

Yet the danger of landing in such a place revealed itself very plainly to him. He knew that the instant he left the airship Gherston's hands would be free and that he would muster the entire ship's company with one call. And what chance would there be for him? He would be a very visible and distinct target for them and the possibility of escaping or finding shelter from their attack was something he was too wise to believe in. The more he thought over it the plainer it became that the one hope of his escaping with his life would be to insist upon their landing him in a populated spot where opportunity for safe shelter offered itself readily. So, having made up his mind, he decided to act without further loss of time.

He called Gherston over to him and the fellow came slowly, his face betraying the helpless resentment he felt.

"You must land me in London," Brett whispered determinedly. "It's no use to tell me it will make 'em suspicious. I'll have to risk that. Tell the chap at the steering-wheel to make for London; tell him I've changed my mind since this fog's come on, and will chance London. Do you hear? And remember I shall be exactly behind you and at the smallest sign I fire! Remember!"

"It is madness. It may mean capture and death for us all. They will be on the lookout for us since your disappearance last night. You ask too much."

"I ask what I intend to have, and no more. I ask a safe landing and you will see that I get it. Now, go!"

Gherston scowled for answer and turned on his heel. The man at the wheel was but a few feet away and it took Gherston barely a moment to reach him. Brett followed closely, yet managed to keep hidden and indistinct in the thickening fog. The three of them—the man at the wheel, Gherston and Brett—were alone on the deck of *Gray Ghost;* they might have been alone in an empty world, so wrapped in silence and solitude were they, with only the beating of the mammoth wings cleaving the air, the race of the propellers stirring the fast following clouds, the throb and roar of the motors as they registered almost full speed, sounding in the mist-clogged space.

Even though he knew that Ostermann lay unconscious and perhaps dead behind the cabin door, Brett felt again the wave of superstitious awe of him he had felt when he realized the magnitude and power of *Gray Ghost.* It was incredible that he, Algy Brett, a mere boy, had conquered and made captive the superman who had wrenched the secret of the air from the gods and called himself the Conjuror of the Clouds! It was foolhardy to dare hope to escape, and yet—and yet he did hope.

Gherston reached the steersman and was speaking to him. Algy tried to hear his words, but the fog muffled them and he was afraid to venture too near. But he waited and watched and his revolver was aimed dead true at Gherston's head.

AND then the moment came. He saw the man at the wheel start and felt the great swerve *Gray Ghost* took as the wheel swung round for a brief instant. Gherston had told the other man! Gherston had warned him! In the winking of an eye the revolver spat and Gherston fell sprawling forward in a heap on the wet deck.

Brett sprang across him to the steersman. "One word—one movement and you are lying there with that fool! Obey me and you're safe. Understand?"

"What do you want?" the man asked, his voice weakening on the words, his fingers trembling as he gripped the wheel. "What do you want? You are not the Captain!"

"No, I'm not Ostermann. I want to be landed immediately, *immediately,* do you hear? If I'm not safe and sound on the earth inside ten minutes, I'll make this little thing speak again! Understand?"

Digitized by Google

The man nodded dazedly and altered the course without comment.

Brett searched him hurriedly and relieved him of a sinister-looking knife and a small pistol. Then he stood by him, alert, ears pricked for the approach of newcomers, eyes directed constantly to the big map fixed to the stanchion before the wheel, and with a revolver now in each hand, ready to fight till the last breath rather than be taken alive again.

The engines were going beautifully, *Gray Ghost* flying as easily and as smoothly as a clipper in a flat-calm sea. Even in those moments of anguished anxiety and with the knowledge that he had killed a man eating into his soul, Algy could not help a feeling of exaltation sweeping over him, compelling the old admiration for the brain of the man who had solved the great problem. In spite of the clinging mists and thickening fog, the towers and spires and bulks of buildings were becoming plain and once, when the sun burst through and dispelled the clouds for an instant, Brett could see the winding Thames glistening and sparkling in the sunshine. He turned to the man beside him.

"Where are we?" he asked sharply, seeing that the fellow's eyes were filled with a kind of lurid triumph and excitement. "Where are we? Why don't you descend here?"

"We are just over Mortlake. I will make the descent now—now——"

His eyes betrayed him! They strayed again to the cabin door, which was scarcely abaft the wheel and only a stride away. But they betrayed him!

As though a live wire passed from his brain to Brett's the knowledge was flashed to Algy that *some one was coming through the door!*

Who was it? Ostermann? Berne? Who was it? Brett's eyes were stiff with sudden fear and scarcely had the power to turn in the direction of the door to see who came. His heart turned sick and a wave of abject misery overwhelmed him. Was this the end after all? Oh, was it Ostermann?

Yes, it was! Ah, no, no, no! Thank heaven, no! Not Ostermann, but Berne! Berne, bleeding and weak, but alive and dangerous! Berne, mad with anger and revenge and about to summon the sleeping crew! And behind Berne? What was that tall shadow swaying at the foot of the companion-ladder? *That was Ostermann!*

Ostermann, too weak yet to climb the tiny flight of steps; Ostermann, reeling and swaying and summoning all his powers of endurance and virile strength, but as weak still as a rabbit.

At the sight of his weakness new strength came to Algy and he leaped forward. At least he would not give in without a struggle and they were almost within hailing distance of the earth. If he could hold out for another three minutes, if he could beat them back through that steel door, could he win through? If he could!

To the man at the wheel he yelled an order to descend immediately or suffer death on the spot, and then dashed behind him and across the deck to the cabin door.

Berne was still leaning against the wall, the sudden freshness of the air almost depriving him of his senses for the first minute and causing the whistle he had intended to call the crew with to drop from his limp fingers. Ostermann had climbed up two steps and was struggling to reach the third. It was as if they had been intoxicated with the drug and were still under its influence.

Even as Algy leaped across the narrow space, Berne had found the whistle again and had it between his teeth. But just as he was about to blow it Algy sprang at him and flung him backward. He went down helplessly, crashing over the steps, carrying Ostermann with him with horrible force—and then Algy could hear them struggling on the cabin floor.

Without waiting for anything save to slam the door and shoot the bolts above and below the handles, Algy raced back to the wheel.

"I give you five seconds to reach land!" he threatened the man.

"We are just down," said the fellow insolently, giving the wheel a vicious jerk and signaling down to the engineer. "And if it had not been that, had I let go the wheel, we would *all* have lost our lives, I would have warned the engineers and chanced your bullet, my young dare-devil Englishman! My neck's not so precious as all that, let me tell you! But I believe the Captain would sooner I let you escape than hurt a rivet of *Gray Ghost!*"

"Chance is a fine thing, my brave-after-the-event fellow, and you never had one! I had one eye on you, don't you worry. Ah, here we are!"

Like a gull settling on the water the airship took the earth; not a jolt, not a quiver

Digitized by Google

shook her; she glided down and rested on the green field.

Reluctantly Algy reversed the big revolver in his hand and drew his arm up. Then he brought it down heavily on the man's head and saw him double up and sink down in a heap beside Gherston's body.

"I had to stun him!" he muttered in extenuation. "I had to do it or I should never have got away!"

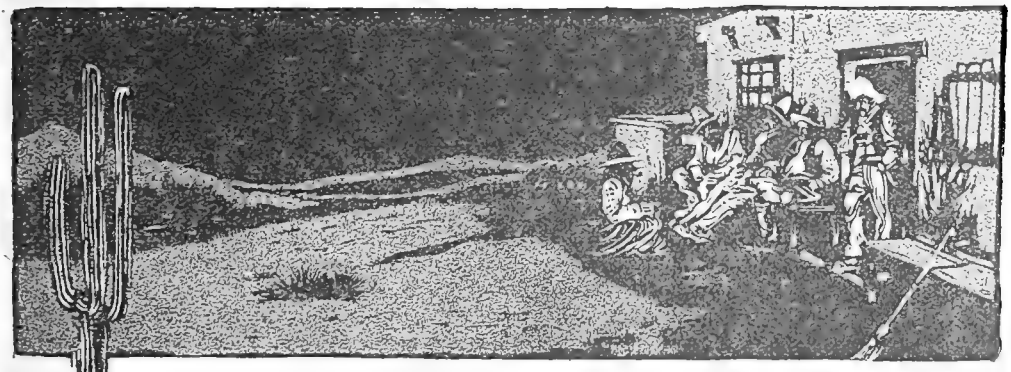
He was running as he spoke, running at top speed, racing and running for dear life!

A big motor-car was coming down the hill toward him and he called madly for them to stop, begged them to take him in, and then, when speeding on again, dashing to London, he broke down and told these strangers, with childish tears, of his escape, of his uncle's death and the man he had killed deliberately.

They did not believe him for one moment, but they humored him and poured brandy down his quivering throat and did their best to quiet him, looking at each other with raised brows over his bowed head and heaving shoulders.

Until one of them looked up.

Flying high, rapidly disappearing into the mists above the lower blue, a long gray airship crept like a specter into view and like a specter vanished.



The PASSING of THE PALS

by Hiram Moe Greene

WE WERE in a new country, Hawley and I. From where we sat on the long bench at "Dug" Rich's store, relief and outline had melted the canyon into the blue-black velvety darkness of an Arizona Winter night. The sky was traced here and there with the lights of the camp that hung precariously on the mountain sides or spangled the long lap of the valley. On the far edge of the canyon was a curious cluster of white stars. From out the darkness came a figure. Hawley called to him as he slouched along the uneven street, and asked the meaning of the lights. He stopped for a moment and chuckled to himself and then turned back. As he came up, Hawley asked him again what the lights were.

"Wal, now, gents," he began, "them stars you see glimmerin', perched down there, is a perticular of the astronomy of these yere diggin's. That's the acetylene constellation, and accordin' to the sign of the sodyack it goes by the name of The Wooden Egg."

"The Wooden Egg! A bar?" said Hawley, guessing right the first time.

"Yep, The Wooden Egg of shootin'-star formation; partly fetched here from Milwaukee, St. Louis, and other fermentin' places. Molten mass from Kentucky and lava from Peory, Illinois. Some in glass and some in the wood. Yer all strangers to me, but if you don't think I'm oversteppin' the limits of human endurance without the customary knock-down, not to mention no names, let me say to you that there ain't a

Digitized by Google

lime or a lemon in the place, and yet it suffuses ambrosical potations of strength and soothin' qualities that make your suitcase restoratives seem like the second story of a custard pie."

Hawley asked him to sit down and he did, dexterously rolling a cigarette. Then he went on.

"Jim Lacey, the feller that used to run that there beverage bee, has his feeding-ground over there across the canyon where you see that sort of green light which is a tissue-paper shade he has on his lamp. He has now got to be a very great reader. You see, from where he is he can look across the canyon and see the light and hear the phoneygraft. On a still night, and most of them is still, he can hear the *ping! ping!* of the welfare work or whatever you may call it of the cash register.

"Jim used to hit 'em up. At times, you know, not a regular, but just an occasional volunteer. But now he's paled out so you couldn't tell him from some feller that had a regular business."

"Did he sell out?" Hawley asked with that irrepressible spirit of commercialism.

"Sell out!" the stranger answered. "Sell out! Wal, you might call it that, but yet there was no genu*ine* consideration passing between the vendor and the vendee as far as any feller could see without wrinklin' the mucous membrane of his eyeballs. I should say the consideration was mostly one dollar, love and affliction. It was not no regular trade. It was a negotiation. There was a change, and yet everythin' is the same as it was. It is just the same as if it had been took over by a syndicate. The business is Jim's and yet he ain't got no right to it. They's conditions.

"From time in memoriam before these here negotiations I'm goin' to tell you about, there was times when Jim would fresco his stomach and kalsomine his intestinal tract with liquor. He'd go for a long time, sometimes months, without touchin' nothin'. In them days he was kind and gentle and pretty nigh as human as a horse. Still there was other times when he'd backslide and sort of saturate. After first gettin' a good start locally, he'd branch out and expand, and them times he'd go away from here into what he called 'new climes.'

"Wal, for some time before this perticular time, a feller from out East somewhere—Illinois, or maybe Missouri, named Tom Durgin, had been around the camp just nachully lookin' things over and waitin' for somethin' to happen. He used to hinge on the bar at Jim's a good deal, and him and Jim used to roast each other about not bein' married, and love and things like that, so they got to be the best of friends, regular David and Jonathans. It was fine to hear 'em. Jim always offset the argyment and kind of wound things up by promisin' Tom that some day he'd double up with a banker's daughter, but that no matter how tough Tom looked he'd bow to him from his private car at the hind end of the train.

"Jim had been asbestomous for some time and he was mopin' around and was as peevish as a moultin' hen. And then—he took a drink. That there touched the key, you might say—started the wheels, and another World's Fair was in motion. He'd been doin' pretty well and had somethin' laid by for a rainy day, so he concluded it would be good for his system to go East and make it rain. He checked up the cash register, give Curly Monger the keys, bought a ticket and headed for the land of corn and wine.

"WAL, as the history of the case relates, the train held to the track and nothin' much happened before he got to St. Louis. When he got there he bought a new suit of clothes, a new hat, and havin' involved himself in the raiment of a regular spendthrift, he trailed into one of them big hotels, out in the hair and face, and feet-wards and was duly lanced and bled for a hair cut, shampoo, shave and shine. When he was comin' out of it, the barber held a razor over him and asked him if he didn't want a facial message to sort of smooth over the rough places. Jim's face is like Pima County, rough and rollin', and he told the barber to give him the whole thing from soda to hock, and then he sunk back. And the feller went to him like a cross-eyed 'Mex.' after a stray cow, and he gives him everything—all the things he knew, and all he could think up. He scraped and scrubbed and scoured and resined and powdered and messaged his face for a plumb two hours.

"And the best testimony is that all the time the fumigatin', annointin' and whitewashin' and brandin' was goin' on, Jim was tryin' to look pleased, comfortable, easy in mind and wallet, and wise to the game

Digitized by Google

But as a matter of fact, he was weak from the overexertion.

"When the barber throwed Jim up straight in the chair and was workin' the combination on the locks that was left, Jim catches his breath, feels for his wallet, and then says easy-like, 'Down to the last turn, eh?' But the feller says, 'No, my good friend, you ought to go to the manicurist.' It was reported afterward that although Jim knew about cleanin' your teeth, not bein' a great reader, he did not know enough of the tonsorial parts and grafts to be on to the fingernail-shine business. But he always had the reputation of bein' honest and game, and of course, bein' informed and illuminated, he didn't care none for expense, so returnin' the barber's friendly salutation, he spit the powder off his lips and said, 'Lead me to it.'

"Wal, they say—I mention 'they' because Jim was attractin' as much attention as a night-bloomin' cereus. Everybody in the shop took great interest in Jim's welfare from the time he was first roped. They all wanted to get a piece of him for souvenirs or somethin', I guess. Between them all—I don't know just how—they got Jim squatted before a little table with a blonde contrivance of twenty Springs and Falls, to say nothin' of intervenin' seasons, on the opposite side.

"'What's the game? Fortune-tellin'?' Jim says, and then he seen a sign over the girl's head, readin', 'Miss Hortense Whitcomb, Manicurist.'

"This Miss Hortense, noticing that Jim was pretty well cologned, didn't pay no attention to his question.

"'I don't take nothin'—gas or anything?' says Jim. The girl just smiled in that easy, familiar, takin' and removin' way city girls has, and told Jim to dangle his hands in a bowl on the table and let the ends soak. And Jim did. In the meantime, the finger-plumber rubbed her tools and laid out her implements of distraction on the table, and waited for Jim to absorb the soapsuds and surroundin's. The bowl wasn't big enough to hold both Jim's hands at the same time, so he had to change about and shift from one hand to the other. I suppose that gradually it was comin' to him what manicurin' meant, and the picture he had seen about it in a Frisco Sunday paper was also bein' freshened in his mind.

"'Your right hand, please,' the girl said, and Jim gently shoved his right, which looks like a bunch of red bananas, to her side of the layout.

"'Right hand to partners 'n' grand right 'n' left,' Jim says in a hoarse whisper.

"'You must be fond of dancin',' the girl says, as she took Jim's hand and sized it up, seein' whether it was a lime and porphyry contact or not, and lookin' for a location to sink the shaft.

"'There ain't no better,' says Jim. Then, as she didn't come back with anything, Jim lets out more information. 'I been dancin' for twenty years,' says he.

"'Continuously?' the girl says, jabbing down the skin off Jim's thumb-nail with a splinter and sneakin' a look at the barbers.

"'No,' Jim says; bein' nervous he spoke before he thought what he said. 'Mostly polkies, waltzes, quadrilles and lancers,' says Jim. 'I'm a warm member on the dance-floor.'

"'You're just a little feverish now,' says the girl, and she stopped prospectin' for a moment and sort o' nestled Jim's hand in hern. Jim hadn't noticed that the rest of the barbers what wasn't busy had drifted down toward the finger-nail end of the institution, and history relates that Jim then said, 'I'm generally feverish in the hand-holdin' game. That's what all the girls say who have took my hand in theirs. They notice it right away. You ain't the only one.' And he gave her a long wink. You can see for yourself Jim had lost control of himself.

"Well, that wink from Jim set the girl back some and one feller who was sittin' in the corner, writin' on a three-cent pad, bust out laughin' and another hollered out loud and made a bee-line for the bar.

"Things were quiet for a while, then the girl says, as she started in to grate Jim's little finger down to the pay streak, 'You must be very popular.'

"'I'm the popularest man in Pima County, Arizona,' Jim says.

"'Is *that* so?' says she, just pretending.

"'You can gamble your business on it,' says Jim. 'Specially with the women who are lookin' forward to the day when they can say they knew Jim Lacey, the Cattle King and Minin' Prince, when he was jest cleanin' up his first million.'

"Course the girl didn't know Jim didn't own a cow and had nothin' in the way of mines but a few location notices stuck

Digitized by Google

around in different places, but she had to make good with them barbers hangin' around and listenin', so she gave Jim this one: 'Suppose you will marry a Western girl and take her around the world for a weddin'-trip?'

"'Wal, now,' says Jim, actin' surprised, 'you're on. I do calculate to take my bride around the world for a weddin'-trip, but I'm lookin' for an Eastern girl to share the joys with me.'

"The girl laughed and got busy 'lustratin' Jim's nails as lively as if she was scourin' an old tin dipper. 'What sort of a girl are you lookin' for?' she asked more quiet, and she wasn't smilin' so much now.

"'Wal,' said Jim, lookin' at her and makin' an eye like an actor, 'one about your size and disposition.'

"And the history of the case relates that right then somebody called out, 'All right'; another feller said, 'Oh, Mr. Lacey!' and then somethin' went off. There was a puff of smoke. A flashlight picture had been took and everybody laughed but Jim. He just looked around.

"He didn't know just what it was all about, but he didn't get mad. He said some things to the girl that nobody heard but her; then he paid his bill, which wasn't far from five dollars, give the girl a dollar, bought the cigars for everybody and left the place without turnin' round, flushed and flimflammed, and leavin' behind him a trail of sweet smells and hair-tonic and the barbers.

"ON WEDNESDAY, just about a week, I should say, after Jim had been laid out, embalmed and dissected at the barber-shop in St. Louis, Doc Redmond, who runs the drug-store, got about two dozen copies of the Sunday edition of a St. Louis paper. It wasn't no commercial number, holiday edition, or real-estate supplement, but there was a whole page of pictures of Jim, showin' him from the time he hit St. Louis; goin' down Pine Street after buying a new hat; up Locust Street after gettin' into a new suit; gawkin' at the news bulletins; and then one long one, about six inches wide, picturin' him in the barber-shop with the finger-nail lady. The readin' matter was wonderful. The English language was used irrespective. The headin' was: 'The Evolution of a Westerner. Jim Lacey, Cattle King and Mining Prince of a Dynasty Yet to Come, Sees St. Louis. Is Seekin' a Bride and Promises a Wedding-Trip that will Encircle the Globe. Many are Called but None are Chosen.'

"'All around the picture was very entertainin' stories about Jim; where he went and what he said, and how he wanted to marry the manicure blonde. This feller what did the writin' on the pad must have been long on shorthand, for he had took down everything that Jim said and some things Jim only had in his head and hadn't let out. He had talked a lot and everything Jim had said had generally got about before he got back, which was the next day after the papers arrived.

"Jim got in late in the afternoon and his moultin' days were over, Jenny dear. He had shed. What feathers there was left on him was droopin'. But he acted sad and friendly like a wet dog, pegged out but cheerful, and glad to be home again until he found out that there was such a demand for them St. Louis papers that Doc Redmond wouldn't sell them, but rented them by the hour and furnished readers for them as couldn't read. Jim wouldn't say much about his trip 'cept that he had a good time. He was as secretive as a hen goin' to set about the details and avoided conversation. He did say along at the first that he was loyal to the West and to Pima County, and when Tom Durgin roasted him he said that the best feller in the world was sometimes generally *non compos mental.*

"Jim kept sizin' things up for a week or so, and then he asks Doc Redmond how he happened to get them St. Louis papers. Doc said he didn't know nothin' about it; it was all news to him. And after cross-questionin' him, I think Jim believed Doc told the truth. Anyway, he didn't hold no grudge against Doc, but he'd get clean riled when anybody said anythin' about his St. Louis trip or called him the 'Cattle King' or the 'Minin' Prince.' And to just say 'blonde' made him shake like he was comin' down with the mountain fever. And the thing just nachully wouldn't die out. Tom would keep it goin'. Jim'd smother it, but when he looked the other way it would blaze up again—and he kept gittin' hotter and hotter, but holdin' himself in.

"About a month went by and then Reddy Coler, who was the telegraph operator at the railway station, was transferred to some jumpin'-off place in Texas, and just before

Digitized by Google

he went away he give Jim, Doc Redmond and two or three fellers a copy of a telegram, and the next day Jim laid for Tom Durgin.

"There was a pretty fair crowd at the place when Tom came in. It was evenin', just about this time. As soon as Tom got up to the bar, Jim turns around and lifts out his Colt pill-box and rubs it affectionately with a towel as if it was to be in good shape for some sad work of reformation. Then Jim comes down and points it at Tom.

"'Tom,' says Jim, sweating around the eyes, 'you and me has been good friends. They is things pals can stand and they is things they can't. Understand? Some things they can't.' Jim's voice was all tremblin'. 'You know what I mean. I've stood for it as long as I'm goin' to. I ain't never killed nobody, but in times past I have put my label on a few, and I could have put them on the St. Peter Limited if I had wanted to. Understand? I could. You and me was pals. But you imposed on my trustful disposition and affectionate nature. You are the guy what started this St. Louis business about me, and I don't mind tellin' you I'm dinged and bedanged sick of hearin' about it!

"'I don't intend to move away from here; I like the place and my business is here, and, anyway, I came here first. But you and me can't live in the came corral. The cost of livin' in these parts is too excessive for you. If I find you in this here town by to-morrow night, I'm goin' to make you like 'mbroidery. And for the benefit of these innocent bystanders I hereby declare that if anybody mentions this St. Louis business to me or ever asks me a single word about this here skunk pal of mine, Tom Durgin, that I likes so well, I'll perforate their air-tight compartments!

"'I don't believe in this here sort of thing, my nature is dead set against it. I am gosh darn sorry for me and Tom and all of us, but I've thought it over and I'm through with the whole business. This here shack and contents I give to Curly Monger which is his to have and to hold and his heirs until such time as I ever touch liquor again, so help me God. I mean what I say, and you as know me, know I am a man of my word. Now, Tom, you clean out!'

"Wal, Tom didn't say nothin' back. It was no time for oral communications. He went out of Jim's place without a word and we followed him. Jim watched him go and they was tears in his eyes. Tom said he was sorry that Jim had got sore about it. All he could say was that Jim made such a hit that his newspaper friend in St. Louis had overdone it. The next mornin' Tom left town.

"Jim has lived over there for a couple of years now, and he ain't never taken a drink. Some say that Durgin busted his heart; others say he's hipped on religion; but for myself, I always thought that Jim thought a lot of that female hand-carpenter."

The narrator started away. Hawley called to him, "Well, good night, Mr.——"

"Monger, Curly Monger, they call me. Good night."

Digitized by Google

VON HOYDONCK MAN

The true story of a famous mutiny

by Frank Marshall White

CAPTAIN STANLEY HATFIELD of the bark *Lennie* looked over the crew that a Thames "crimp," or shipping agent, had brought from London to the berth of his ship at the Antwerp wharves, October 24, 1875, and earnestly called upon his Maker to witness that he had never before beheld such a scurvy-looking herd of swine within ten miles of a ship in the thirty years he had been at sea.

"So 'elp me," he declared to the shipping agent, "I bloomin' well might 'ave sent to Lambeth work'us, an' found a likelier lot! Bli' me, if I 'aven't 'arf a mind to ship the 'ole bleedin' gang back w'erever you got 'em from, an' let you an' them go 'ang for your crew!"

Only two of the ten men to whom he had thus feelingly referred understood his remarks literally, for the crew was a racial composite that included four Turks, three Greeks, an Englishman, an Austrian and a Dane, and only one of them besides the Englishman was conversant with the language of Britain. All were aware of the trend of the Captain's criticism, however, and they scowled upon him frankly.

The master of the *Lennie* could scarcely be blamed, from a seaman's point of view, for objecting to the nondescript ten as sailors. But the *Lennie*, which was of a thousand tons burden and owned in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, had been ready to sail for New Orleans from Antwerp, with a mixed cargo, and, as Captain Hatfield had been unable to obtain a crew in the port where his ship lay, he had been compelled at the last moment to telegraph to the shipping agent in London, who had picked up the ten men for him along Ratcliffe Highway—the riffraff of their calling, small men for the most part, shabby and unkempt.

The first and second mates of the *Lennie* were Englishmen, respectively Joseph Wortley and Robert McDonald. Captain Hatfield made Green boatswain, Green being, despite the name he gave as his own, a Greek, though able to speak and understand English and therefore able to act as interpreter for the Captain's orders.

There were yet two more nationalities represented on the vessel's roster. The man whose splendid heroism and daring ingenuity in the face of death make the story of the *Lennie* worth telling was a giant from Belgium, six feet and three inches tall, who was at that time twenty-five years of age, and whose name was Constant Von Hoydonck. He had shipped as steward, although he held a master's certificate in the merchant marine, and he spoke English, French and Dutch. The cabin-boy was Dutch, his name being Henri Trousselot, and he had been brought on board by Von

Digitized by Google

Hoydonck, to whose care the lad had been entrusted by his parents.

The *Lennie* sailed from Antwerp with her polyglottous crew the day after their arrival from London, and her cruise is memorable in the annals of the sea. It is a story that has not been made public since it was related in an English criminal court by the participants in the occurrence thirty-five years ago. Five European Governments decorated the hero of the exploit.

That Captain Hatfield, First Mate Wortley and Second Mate McDonald deserved the fate that overtook them five days out from Antwerp there is little doubt, for all three were cruel and brutal taskmasters, whose method of getting the most work out of the men under them was by means of curses and blows. The crew was inefficient in the first place, and only half able to comprehend the orders given them. Their officers made their lives miserable. A kick or a blow would almost invariably follow a command on the *Lennie*, and it never seemed to occur to the English officers that the foreign sailors were capable of forcibly resenting brutalities. It was the philosophy of the officers that the blacker the looks of the men became, the heavier was the physical discipline essential.

Whether the sailors had previously formed a conspiracy for the murder of the *Lennie's* officers or whether they turned on them simultaneously on being driven to desperation is a question that was afterward considered by an English jury. The tragedy occurred early on the morning of October 31st, the *Lennie* being then off the island of Oleron in the Bay of Biscay. In First Mate Wortley's watch, from midnight until four o'clock, were Boatswain Green, Cargalis, Caludis, Kaida, Ranken and Petersen. At three-thirty, Wortley gave the order to put the ship about, and, as a fresh breeze was blowing, all hands were ordered to the work. Ranken, the Englishman, was at the wheel, and, while the others were at the main braces, Captain Hatfield came on deck and fell upon them with kicks and cuffs.

"Git to work, ye —— —— ——!" he roared.

Cargalis suddenly drew a big clasp-knife from his pocket, opened it and sprang upon the Captain, driving the point of the weapon into his stomach. In the fraction of a second Caludis, the Turk known as "Big Harry," had followed the example of the Greek, stabbing Hatfield in the forehead and side and then seizing him about the waist and bearing him to the deck, where he proceeded to pull off the prostrate man's boots, preparatory to throwing him overboard, while two others of the crew hacked at their late taskmaster with knives.

ALL these things had occurred in much less time than it takes to describe them, and it was not until the Captain—who had had no weapon with him, even if he had been given the chance to use it—had been stretched on the deck that the first mate realized what was occurring. He, too, was unarmed, but he sprang to the side of Hatfield, who was still alive, and attempted to drag him toward the saloon. In a flash, Cascaris drove his knife into Wortley's heart, twice repeating the thrust, and the second victim fell dead across the body of the first.

Roused by the noise of the struggle on the deck, Second Mate McDonald at this moment rushed from his cabin. Seeing the bleeding bodies of his two superior officers and the ferocious countenances and streaming knives of the crew, he ran to Boatswain Green, the only one of them to whom he could speak English, and putting his arms around his neck begged him to save his life. The Greek responded with a thrust of his knife into the other's bowels, when McDonald, although seriously wounded, ran up into the rigging.

Stopping long enough to brace the foreyards, the men having dropped the ropes the moment Cargalis stabbed the Captain, the pursuit of the unhappy second mate began. There were two cheap pistols in the possession of members of the crew, and, while Cascaris fired with one of them at McDonald from below, Kaida climbed to a point above him and put two bullets into him from that vantage point. The dying man had sufficient strength left to come hand below hand to the deck, where Cascaris stabbed him repeatedly in the breast, and Cargalis, standing on the prostrate body, almost severed the head from the trunk with his murderous knife.

The sounds of the struggle on the deck over his head had wakened Von Hoydonck, who had been asleep in his bunk. He had heard the pistol-shots without realizing what they meant; then the cabin-boy, who

Digitized by Google

had also been roused by the commotion and had ventured to peep over the top of the companionway to the deck, rushed in frenziedly to inform him that the ship's officers were being murdered by the crew. The young giant bounded out of his bunk and, without waiting to put on clothes or boots, seized a heavy cane, the only weapon at hand, and made for the deck.

As he reached the head of the companionway the mutineers saw him and swung the door to, half a dozen of them putting their combined weight against it. Then, as his strength seemed likely to outlast theirs, a plank was brought and nailed across the frame, effectually securing it. A moment later the man at the wheel gave a warning shout, as the steward's head appeared in the skylight over the saloon. He had climbed on the dining-table below it and broken the glass, but the sailors managed to drop the hatch over the skylight and nail that down also. They had used up all the cartridges for the two pistols in their possession in shooting at McDonald, though Von Hoydonck was not aware of that at the time.

Imprisoned with the cabin-boy in what had been the officers' quarters, for the single companionway and the skylight were the only means of egress, Von Hoydonck dressed himself and made a rapid search for weapons. He was fortunate enough to find two revolvers and a box of cartridges in the Captain's stateroom, and these he put into his pockets. Then he considered the situation. If, as was doubtless the case, the Captain and the first and second mates had been killed, there was no one on board capable of navigating the ship save himself, for he had observed that the ten members of the crew scarcely knew one sail of the *Lennie* from the other. He knew the men were aware that he was a qualified navigator, for he had laid out the ship's course for Captain Hatfield the second day out.

He was also aware that the first thought of the crew would be to get ashore, for to be discovered on board the *Lennie* without her officers would be presumptive evidence that they had been made away with and meant the gallows. He reflected that the others would probably attempt to make him sail the vessel within sight of the coast and then kill him and desert her for the shore. He could count on no assistance on board the ship, for Henri, the cabin-boy, was only fourteen years of age and of a timorous disposition.

While Von Hoydonck was speculating on these matters the skylight over the saloon was pried up a few inches, and Green, the boatswain, called to him. "We want to have a talk with you," he said. "We ain't going to hurt you. We've got a proposition to make."

Considering that he might as well bring things to a crisis first as last, the Belgian responded, bidding Green come down to the saloon. Von Hoydonck ensconced himself behind the table, with one revolver in his hand, and posted Henri on a chair in the corner with the other, which he bade him keep pointed at the door. When Green, followed by the others, with Cargalis, Kaida and Cascaris close at his back, appeared at the portal, they were confronted by the two weapons, the one in the corner waving tremulously, and the other steady in the hand of the big Belgian.

"Only one of you inside the door!" said Von Hoydonck calmly. "Come in, Green, and let me know what you've got to say, quick! Tell the others to keep back!"

Giving the order to his fellows, who were quite willing to get out of range of the two pistols—seeming, indeed, to fear the one that was wavering with the boy's nerveless finger on the trigger rather than the other, the boatswain stepped up to the table, his swarthy features twisted into what was intended to be an ingratiating grin, and said: "We don't intend to do you any harm We've finished with the others."

"What do you mean?"

"We've finished with the Captain and the first and second mates, and thrown their bodies overboard," Green explained.

"What do you want of me?"

"We want you to join us," said the Greek. "There's a fortune here for all of us."

He proceeded to explain that Cargalis was his cousin and that they had an uncle in Greece who was a dealer in nautical goods and incidentally a "fence" for stolen ships, who would buy the *Lennie* and her cargo for cash if they should deliver her off Zacynthus, an island near the coast in the Ionian Sea. If Von Hoydonck would navigate the ship to the point described, Green told him, he would be permitted to share and share alike with the ten members of the crew in the proceeds of the sale of vessel and cargo.

Digitized by Google

WHILE the boatswain was speaking an idea flashed across Von Hoydonck's mind—to seem to agree to the proposition to sail the *Lennie* to Greece, but, relying on the ignorance of the crew, actually to navigate her to England in the opposite direction, turn her over to her owners and bring the mutineers to justice. Out of sight of land the sailors would not know whether they were sailing north or south, and on nearing shore he could choose a part of the coast where he might be sure to find other vessels at hand to render assistance. He was aware, of course, that part of the plan of the mutineers was to kill him so soon as the *Lennie* was anchored off Zacynthus, and he considered that the best chance to save himself, the cabin-boy, and the ship lay along the coast of England.

Wherefore Von Hoydonck, professing immense relief that he was not included among the enemies of the crew and great joy at the prospect of an immediate fortune, eagerly assented to the scheme outlined by the boatswain, that worthy translating him to the non-English-speaking rascals, who crowded into the saloon to make protestations of friendship.

The Belgian had meantime taken the second pistol from Henri, and ostentatiously put both weapons into his own coat pockets. A moment later a scream from the boy caused the giant to turn hurriedly and see Henri in the grasp of Kaida, who was dragging him toward the companionway. Springing after them, Von Hoydonck struck the Turk a blow in the jaw from behind that rendered him unconscious for ten minutes, threw the boy into a corner of the room and stood at bay before him with the two revolvers drawn, one in each hand. "Tell the men that I'll kill the next one that lays a hand on this boy!" he roared to Green.

There was an outcry when the boatswain translated this message to the others, and Green told the Belgian that they were all agreed that Henri must be got out of the way, since he had witnessed the murder of the officers of the ship and his death was the surest method of preventing his ever telling the story in a court of law. At that moment the thought struck Von Hoydonck that the best course he could pursue was to take a high hand with the mutineers, since they were infatuated with the scheme of selling the *Lennie* in Greece and could not put it through without him. That strongest of all sentiments, self-interest, would protect him for the present at least.

"I'm master of this ship until we get to Greece!" he bellowed, for the sake of the effect of his stentorian voice rather than from rage. "My orders are that no member of this crew comes within twenty feet of this boy or myself on pain of death! I treat with the others only through the boatswain, and he comes to me alone! Out of here now, all of you!"

The giant fell upon the ten members of the crew with kicks and buffets, driving them up the companionway like a flock of sheep, dragging the still unconscious Kaida with them. The boatswain was back in ten minutes to tell Von Hoydonck that the crew were willing to take his orders, and asked that he lay the *Lennie's* course for Greece at once. Green said further that the men would like the navigator to show him on the chart where the ship then was and explain the process of laying her course. As he could not refuse without exciting the strongest suspicion as to his good faith, he was obliged to acquiesce.

When the sun was high enough for the taking of observations, Von Hoydonck went on deck with the sextant. Some of the crew were washing the blood from the woodwork where the tragedies of the morning had occurred, and the coat, boots and hat that had been removed from the Captain's body before it had been thrown over the side were lying in a heap together, blood-stained and soiled. Others of the men were obliterating the name "*Lennie*" from the ship's bow and quarters and from the boats, and painting it out at the stern. The cabin-boy, who was still suffering severely from fright, as he did throughout the rest of the voyage, came on deck with the steward and kept close at his side.

The crew stopped work while Von Hoydonck took his observations, but bore in mind his order to them to keep at a distance. He worked out his sights on paper for the benefit of Green, who made a great pretense of understanding the figures, though the Belgian was delighted to discover that the Greek knew nothing at all even of simple arithmetic. It made the prospect of carrying through the deception with regard to the ship's subsequent course much brighter.

The navigator found the *Lennie* to be about one hundred and fifty miles south of

Digitized by Google

Falmouth, in approximately forty-six degrees north latitude and eight degrees west longitude. During the period of excitement over the murder of the ship's officers and the conference with the steward the wheel had been lashed or left unattended, and the vessel had moved out of her course so that she pointed almost due west. Showing Green the correct position of the *Lennie* on the Captain's chart, Von Hoydonck explained the necessity of changing the southwest course she had previously pursued for New Orleans, to a southerly one for Gibraltar, *en route* for the Ionian Sea *via* the Mediterranean.

In putting the ship about, however, he gave orders that reversed the direction, without creating suspicion in the mind of the ignorant Greek. Thus, when the boatswain showed the chart to the other mutineers, pointing out to them the position of the *Lennie* off the French coast and explaining the course she was taking toward Spain, she was in reality making for England. So pleased were the crew with the way their get-rich-quick scheme was progressing that they applauded Von Hoydonck as he turned toward the saloon.

FOR four days the *Lennie* sailed northward, and each day the Belgian took his observations, marking the chart to show the mutineers how far she had traveled south, while he carried the actual reckoning as nearly as possible in his head. In the meantime, though they obeyed Von Hoydonck's orders as to the navigation of the ship, the crew did not treat him as commander of the expedition. They allowed him and the cabin-boy the use of the steward's quarters, but Cargalis, who had assumed the murdered Captain's coat, hat and boots, also took possession of his stateroom, while Kaida and Cascaris occupied the berths of the first and second mates. Fortunately for the success of Von Hoydonck's plan, the *Lennie* was what was known as a "teetotal ship" and carried no intoxicants. Had the cut-throat crew had the facilities for getting drunk on board, the outcome might have been different.

Von Hoydonck had devoted every opportunity to the secret preparation of bulletins in French and English to be thrown overboard in bottles on nearing land, conveying information of the mutiny. His intention on reaching the English coast was to keep up the pretense that the *Lennie* was in southern waters until that was no longer possible; and, when the members of the crew should finally ascertain that they had been tricked, to retreat to the saloon with Henri and sell their lives as dearly as possible, provided help did not reach them.

Carrying his reckonings in his head, Von Hoydonck miscalculated their arrival off the English shore, coming within sight of land just as it was growing dark on the evening of November 3rd. As the land appeared off the starboard bow, he had no difficulty in making the crew believe that it was the coast of Morocco they saw, explaining that, owing to inaccuracies in his calculations, the ship had run past Gibraltar. The *Lennie* was at once put about, and, giving up the idea of obtaining succor from England, Von Hoydonck sailed the ship into the Bay of Brest on the north coast of France, which his dupes naturally took to be Spain.

Arriving the following evening, he told them that they were off Cadiz; and, as the weather happened to be stormy, suggested that they anchor over night, particularly as it would be necessary to take new observations of the sun before laying out the ship's course through the Mediterranean. His plans were further favored by the weather, it being unusually warm for November. Otherwise the suspicions of the crew might have been roused, since most of them would have been aware that the month should have been balmy in the south of Spain although ordinarily bleak in the north of France.

The mutineers assented to the dropping of the anchor, and before daybreak Von Hoydonck had not only contrived surreptitiously to throw over the *Lennie's* side twenty-four bottles, each containing one of the messages, in French and English, revealing conditions on board the ship and asking for assistance, but had managed to run up a distress signal where it might be observed in the morning should another vessel come close enough before the crew discovered it. Of course the hoisting of the flag of distress could not fail to convince the crew that the Belgian was playing them false, but he thought it best to precipitate the crisis then and there.

He had thrown over his messages with

Digitized by Google

the in-tide and calculated that some of them would be picked up that morning, when the distress signal would at once identify the *Lennie* as the vessel with mutiny aboard and bring about a rescue. Events occurring as he anticipated, he felt that he would be able to hold himself and Henri behind barricaded doors until the mutineers were subjugated. He had food and water enough in his quarters to last himself and the boy for a week, and he was confident that relief would come within that period.

What were the reflections of this brave man as he attempted to soothe the terrified child under his care while awaiting the outcome of the plans that meant life or death for both, have not been made known, for Von Hoydonck could never be induced to talk about that phase of his adventure. He had a wife and child in Belgium, however, and it may be imagined that on their behalf as well as his own, his prayers for the guidance of his tide-borne messages were earnest. It so happened, however, that the first of his bottles was not found for two days—on the Brittany coast ten miles from the point where it was thrown overboard.

IT WAS still stormy when day broke the next morning, and Von Hoydonck, peering from the porthole of his steward's cabin, saw that there was considerable shipping about them. The crew had discovered the flag of distress almost immediately, however, and at once brought it down, but not until it had been descried by a passing tug-boat. The tug at once came alongside, but could not get close enough for any communication other than by signal. The mutineers were clever enough to explain, in response to the tug's signals, that their distress was due to the fact that their chronometer had run down, whereupon the other boat signaled them the time and went its way.

Had Von Hoydonck then been aware that the crew had no ammunition for the pistols he knew to be in their possession, he would have given them battle while they were signaling, in the hope that the men on the tug would have taken cognizance of it. But he took for granted that his appearance outside of his cabin door, now that the others on board knew him to be hostile, would be the signal for him to be shot from ambush.

To test the accuracy of this surmise, he hung his coat and cap over a cane and made Henri hold it just outside the cautiously unbolted door, he himself standing behind the boy with revolver cocked. Two knives went into the cap like a flash, and Von Hoydonck dragged the boy back and slammed and bolted the door just in time to save his life, and without having had a chance to fire. Although pistols had not been used on this occasion, the Belgian did not know the reason why, and would not give his enemies an advantage by making himself a target for them.

While Von Hoydonck had been plotting against the mutineers, they, too, had been plotting. Believing themselves to be at Cadiz, it had occurred to them that it would be possible to navigate the *Lennie* through the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean, keeping within sight of the shore and hence obviating the necessity of taking the sun and making calculations therefrom. Hence they had decided to murder their navigator (and incidentally the cabin-boy) in the morning and get along without him. Had Von Hoydonck, therefore, not anticipated trouble because of having run up the distress flag and been led to take precautions in leaving his cabin, he would doubtless have been killed then.

The mutineers set sail and started for Gibraltar that morning, posting a continual lookout at the door of the steward's cabin. Much to their surprise, however, after sailing for three days southward along the coast, no Rock of Gibraltar hove in sight. According to the Admiralty chart on board it should have been only a day's run from Cadiz. On the third night, moreover, a storm drove them out of sight of land, and the next day they were compelled to make overtures to Von Hoydonck.

Being in a position to dictate to the mutineers, the Belgian demanded that their two pistols, which he knew to be the only ones on board with the exception of the two he carried, be handed in to him before he left his cabin. It was when this condition was complied with that he learned to his chagrin that the ammunition for the weapons had given out with the shooting of McDonald eight days before, and that he might have thrown down the gauntlet to the desperadoes when they were in the Bay of Brest.

By a remarkable coincidence the *Lennie*

Digitized by Google

was found to be approximately in the same position when Von Hoydonck made his observations that morning as she had been when he assumed the duties of navigator on the day her officers were murdered. He refused to answer any of Green's questions as to their whereabouts, however, and ordered the interpreter to inform the others that he would kill the first member of the crew who came any closer to him or to Henri than either of them might consider desirable.

Indeed, the angry giant would have provoked a quarrel had it not been for the possibility of reducing the crew's efficiency to a point where the successful navigation of the ship might have been endangered. The crew was tractable, however, and each one of the ten men kept at an entirely respectful distance.

Von Hoydonck sailed the *Lennie* for the Pointe de L'Aiguille in the province of Vendée, bringing her to anchor about five miles from shore on the evening of the ninth of the month, for he was sure that some of his messages would have been picked up by that time and that search would have been instituted for the mutiny ship. That night Cargalis, Cascaris, Kaida, Caludis, Angelos and Green took Captain Hatfield's property and the ship's papers and went ashore in one of the ship's boats at Sables d'Olonne, where they claimed to be ship-wrecked sailors, all unaware that the bottle found farther up the coast had made the news of the mutiny known all along the west of France. The six sailors were at once recognized as members of the murderous crew, and were arrested and put in irons.

Meanwhile Von Hoydonck, with the Englishman, the Dane, the Austrian and a Turk for his crew, had navigated the ship to the vicinity of La Flotte, off the Isle de Ré. Here on the following morning, the 10th of November, the French man-of-war *Travailleur*, that had got track of her through the landing of the six mutineers at Sables d'Olonne, overtook the *Lennie*, and the brave Belgian's long vigil was over. His reception on board the French warvessel, when it was discovered that a member of a French-speaking race, himself the next thing to a Frenchman, had saved an English ship and a human life and brought about the apprehension of a mutinous crew after her English officers had succumbed, may be imagined.

NEWSPAPER reporting was not as highly developed a vocation in Europe in the seventies of the last century as it is to-day, and it was not until the trail of the ten mutineers in England the following May that Von Hoydonck's fame became international. There were seven nationalities represented on the *Lennie's* disastrous trip and, of these, five, as represented by their Governments, decorated the Belgian hero—his own country, France, the Netherlands, Austria and Greece, while the English Order of St. John of Jerusalem gave him a silver medal.

It was possible to hang only four of the ten mutineers, the same being Cargalis, (Greek) and Cascaris, Kaida and Caludis, (Turks), who had done the actual killing of the three officers of the *Lennie*. As has been mentioned, the guilt of the others turned on the question as to whether or not a conspiracy had been formed. As the jury decided that no conspiracy had existed, and as the men had been extradited from France on a specific charge of murder and might not be put in peril for any lesser offense under England's extradition law with France, the other six men could not be tried as accessories after the fact and they went free.

The trial of the ten mutineers in London's criminal court, which lasted a week, was the sensation of the time. Crowds were turned away from the courtroom and the gigantic Belgian was overwhelmingly lionized, much to his embarrassment. At the close of the trial, Justice Brett, who presided, added to his discomforts by addressing a few remarks to Von Hoydonck which are thus reported in the London *Times:*

"I am of opinion that you, being put in a position of as great difficulty and danger as any man well could be, and having cast upon you a great responsibility, acted with admirable courage and with great dexterity, and that you, by your courage, fortitude and dexterity, assisted bravely in the apprehension of these wicked men. More than that, I think that at the danger of your own life you undertook to defend this defenseless boy who was left alone, and I must say that in my opinion, sitting here as the representative of the law, I consider that every honor is due to you.

"I have no power to do what might be done in your own country, to decorate you for an honorable and courageous service. If I had, I would. But I am in a position where, in the first place, I can deliver to you the thanks of the public for your conduct, and, treating you as the man I believe you to be, I believe that such a declaration, coming from a

Digitized by Google

Judge who is presiding in a Court, will be as satisfactory as a decoration could be.

"More than that, I have the power, and therefore I mean to exercise it, to order that a money reward be paid to you, and I do not think that under the almost unexampled circumstances the reward ought to be a small one. Of course, not dealing with my own money, I have no right to make it more than a recognition of what I consider your service, and I direct, therefore, that a reward of fifty pounds be paid to you for your honorable and courageous conduct in the matter."

It is gratifying to know that the owners of the *Lennie*, dealing with their own money, added a thousand pounds to the fifty awarded to Von Hoydonck by Justice Brett. Those ten terrible days at sea had sickened the Belgian of the water, however, and he brought his wife and daughter to London, where he invested his money in a public house, the White Hart Hotel, in the High Street of Shadwell just off Whitechapel Road. Here, many years afterward, the present writer had the pleasure of hearing the hero modestly relate the story of his adventure, and also of inspecting the five decorations under a glass case in the bar parlor.

SIGOLE!

by *Walter Archer Frost*

"WHICH," said Fletcher, the Indian agent, "is a friendly salutation in the Oneida language. It means, 'Good be with you.' Like the German *du*, it has a certain tenderness. It once established a lasting peace where there was need of it."

And then he told me the story.

They ought to have been friends, but, instead, they hated each other for nearly half their lives. And perhaps this was to have been expected, in the case of such natural rivals, following a trade so distinctly masculine. For "Long" Piet was a six-foot-six Upper Mishigami river-driver, who could flip an eighteen-foot dory out of the water and wear it upon his head as easily as if it had been a hat. And this was only one

Digitized by Google

of his accomplishments; as a matter of fact, he was put in as boss at the beginning of his second season because each of his arms and legs was so full of wickedness.

And Aaron Dill, three inches shorter, but if anything, broader, was the pride and dread of the cruisers on the Wolf; he was a human fall-and-tackle, whose fists worked automatically from the love of it.

Piet's family-tree was an agglomerate which would have made Luthur Burbank weep.

Aaron was a full-blood Oneida Indian. They name their children after the Bible heroes read of at the Reservation schools, and give the *most* Biblical names to their toughest propositions, as if to shrive them of the sins which they are predestined to commit—a husband who attacked his wife with the heavy end of a bottle on his first night home from jail was known as "Lot Absolom"; she *waited for* him, routed him with furniture and other bottles, and then deserted him, and her name was "Naomi Ruth." I have heard it suggested that Satan must have had Indian parents; but that is improbable, for they would have christened him "The Angel Gabriel."

I don't know when Piet and Aaron first came together. But sometimes, when full, the rivers they worked on jump into each other; and the two men followed their example at similar periods, parting each time with the sweet assurance that they would meet again. There was the ground-work of an epic here, but their employers were too practical to see it; and after a combat so frightful that it beggared even their former ones, Piet was sent grumbling southward to where a competitor's crews were bothering, and Aaron, stolid and sullen, was loaned to the Montreal River outfit to help drive a heavy contract through.

Before they separated they promised each other a final reckoning, howled back that it was only *auf wiedersehen*, and shook their fists at each other until they were out of sight. They had no family ties; such experts as they were in demand everywhere in the timber; their packs held everything they owned; and, since they were now headed in opposite directions, there was little reason to believe that they would ever meet again. But they were to swing together out of the wilderness, utter freelances though they were.

PIET was the first to emerge. Within a year he left the pine for the police force of a fermenting city half-way down the State. On the heels of this transition soon followed a second, for the position his youth and physical magnificence had secured for him was too mean for the mentality he had inherited from his forgotten forbears. He outgrew the force almost immediately; in three years he was the most effective man in the Council; in another three he was talked of for Mayor. But some nearer ancestor turned over in his grave at this, and Piet reverted to the extent of opening a saloon a couple of miles outside of the nearest Indian Reservation, where he made money terribly.

The Reservation happened to be that of the Oneidas, Aaron's people. But Aaron—well, there was a warrant out for Aaron. It was merely that he had enabled an up-State marshal to collect on an accident policy and, though he had wandered back to his tribe by this time, and married and put up a house, it was said that he was never there. However, a detective couldn't have found him, out there, even if he had *been* there and each of them had carried Tungsten lamps. And the warrant for him got lost, and about all of us, except Piet, forgot that Aaron had ever been.

That Fall the Commissioner of Indian Affairs sent me through the Eastern and the Middle Western tribes collecting data for a Government report, and it was nearly March before I was back among my Oneidas again. About the time I got my office cleaned up, I dropped in at "Piet's Place," where the looming, philosophic giant and the red-hot stove made me feel as if I hadn't been away at all.

We went over a lot of things, that long, gray, quiet afternoon, and at length, remembering his feud with Aaron, I asked if anything had been heard of him.

"Yes," said Piet, "he turned up about four months ago."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes."

"He didn't see you, then!"

"Yes, he did; and he comes in, every now and then, and sits in that chair where you are sitting now."

"But, Piet, you don't mean to say that you and he are friends?"

"Yes, Fletcher, I mean exactly that."

"How, in the name of——" But some-

Digitized by Google

thing in his manner checked me, and, turning his large eyes on me, Long Piet told me how.

"It'll take us back to Thanksgiving night. I was here, behind the bar, and by half-past ten a couple of dozen Indians had come in. Some I recognized and some I didn't, for I was busy with what was ordering. You know what they're like. They were that way then, only more so, and by midnight things began to hum.

"Ordinarily, they stand close up and talk to me across the bar, for they aren't used to such a big mirror and like to look into it. But, that night they held off. What little they said was in their own language, and they acted as if they had something up their sleeves.

"I started putting them out about two A. M., and though they weren't what you'd call ugly, they hung back, and I had to half drag, half carry them; and even then, they didn't go home, but hung around outside the door.

"I had forgotten one man, who had kept off in a corner out of the lamp-light and hadn't drunk anything; but as I was wiping my arm across my face, he got up and came slowly toward me. And after one look I knew why the others had waited, for the man was Aaron Dill.

"It was more than six years since I had seen him, but he was as lean and wide and hard as ever, and eager to take up our old row again. So was I. But I was winded from handling all those Indians, and so I walked over to him and said:

"'These fellows have been making me work, Aaron; but I'll meet you anywhere you like at ten to-morrow night.'

"He understood, and I believe that he would have waited. But some one in the crowd at the door told him that he had lost his nerve. That settled it. The old, wicked look sprang into his eyes and he came at me; and, because I wasn't fresh enough to close with him, I kicked him, and kicked him *good*.

"When he came to, the others had gone and I was standing over him. He wasn't hurt any, but there wasn't any more air in him than if he had never drawn a breath in all his life. I was through. But I knew if I didn't scare the liver out of him, he'd come back and lay for me, so I bent down close and said:

"'Aaron Dill, I'm going to let you go out to the Reservation now, but before long I'm going to come out there and find you. And, when I've found you, I'm going to kill you! And then I'm going to dig a grave for you, and put you in it, and throw logs and dirt and snow and ice in on top of you, and stamp it down, and you're going to stay there! Now, you get out of here!' And he *got*."

"I should think he would have," I agreed. "But you said you were friends, and you can't mean that it is because you kicked his belt-buckle into the back pockets of his pants!"

"No, there is more to it. He went like a bat out of Hades, and I thought he'd never dare come back for me. But, after a while, I didn't feel so sure. I used to try to figure it out, there in the early mornings after the crowd had gone. Then I realized that he hated me now worse than ever and would come back again. I didn't object to his coming, but I wanted him to give me fair warning. The question was—*would* he?

The uncertainty bothered me. I kept inside as much as I could after sunset, and looked around carefully when I went out alone by day; I learned, for the first time in my life, to sleep lightly; I kept a gun there in the bedroom, another behind the bar, and carried a third. I credited every unexplained noise and shadow to Aaron. You may say I was nervous, and perhaps I was. Perhaps, though, I was right, and he was there watching me. Such things have happened. You and I know of them.

"BUT a man can't be on the watch every moment—he forgets, unless he's an Indian; and I got tired of it. I'd always gone right to any man I had business with, before, and after another week I couldn't stand it any longer. I put in a man to run the place here, and next morning took the road that leads to the Reservation, to find and have a final settle up with Aaron Dill.

"As it happened, it was just about a month from the night that he came in, the air was thick with a blizzard breaking loose, and by the time I crossed the Reservation line, it was snowing hard. But the more I saw what I was up against, the more I swore that I'd never turn back until I'd found him, and I kept on. The storm had got its stride by the time I left the traveled road for the corduroys. There seemed to be

Digitized by Google

no air; instead, a lead-colored bank, whose speed gave it the impact of a solid, as wide as the world and as deep as the atmosphere. The wind was as if the pull of gravity had changed from vertical to lateral—tree trunks were bent in one direction and held that way; heavy limbs flew horizontally; everything loose had already gone before the drive of it. It struck me between my shoulders; trying to stand still, I walked; trying to walk, I ran. It was going in my direction, and that was all very well. But, if it changed——

"The path along the rail-fence at the road-side had shaped my course for me, but it soon stopped, and I groped on, aiming for Aaron's house, out in the rough-hewed clearing where I had once arrested his father, Israel. Every now and then I felt that I was being followed; and once I broke into the brush and lay flat, waiting for the man or thing to pass me and go on; but there was only the endless march of wind and storm. I still thought I heard voices, but probably I imagined it. You know how it is.

"Then, so gradually that I did not at first notice it, the corduroy fell away. I was among young firs and spruces. I turned back, trying to find my tracks, but the drift had erased them. I looked here and there, but direction had left me; it may have been that the wind had veered; perhaps, though I doubt it, disuse had robbed me of some of my woodcraft.

"I don't know. All I did know was that I couldn't get back on the road at all. I'd heard men try to describe that sensation, but I didn't give way to it. I turned and dove into the wind, some instinct telling me to bear sharply to the left. After another hour's plunging, I came up against the foundations of an unfinished house and crouched behind the crude stone-work for a few breaths, then went in as straight a line as I could for what looked like a pile of logs, sixty feet away.

"It proved to be a smoke-house, the door fastened by a strap which showed the flexibility of recent use. With this as a compass I found a path which brought me out to the stooping shanty of old, unreconstructed Israel, and there was Aaron's house, close by, backed by the forest wall of reeling tamaracks. Under the cover of my coat I unscrewed the case of my watch and felt what time it was. I had started at seven; it was now noon. But another five hours would not have been missed or noticed; that gloom might well have been the beginning of the night.

"The house was so dark that only the regularity of the outline told that it was a thing made by man. It seemed deserted. Certainly Aaron was not there. But I turned toward it, for it meant a temporary refuge, if not a fighting-ground. And even if there was nothing to start a fire with, I had Israel's barn and a bed of hay.

"I was thinking how I would sleep and how warm the hay would be, when suddenly the path dropped out from under me, and I went down, down, down, bringing up at the bottom with a log across my legs, another across my shoulders and something the matter with my arm between the elbow and the wrist. Get loose? I settled only the closer with every writhe I made! Dark? There never had been any light down there! Cold? And my broken arm? Yes, it was an Indian bear-trap, set there in the path, a short yard from his door, waiting, with a patience itself aboriginal, for me! I had told Aaron that I was coming out to find him, and he had believed me. That was all. And even in the helplessness and finality of it, I realized how perfectly the death which I had promised him had been copied in this which he had given me.

"God knows I did my best before I gave up to it! But hobble a man the way I was, then snap one of his arms, and he's going to stay where you leave him. The best I could hope for was that he would come and find me. I know that that sounds odd, now; but the alternative was a sleep which even he could never break. I knew that he couldn't be far off and might come any time; or, confident in his trap and its tenacity, he might wait a day, two days, a week. I didn't follow it further—a day at the longest! I was not concerned with what happened after that.

"Then how I fought the sleep that I had longed for! I set myself not to think of it—but could think of nothing else. No vision of weariness and rest, of cold and warmth, passed by me. I thought of March storms and the crackling fires along the camps on the Upper Mishigami, of the long days, sixteen hours of work to each of them, and how we then turned in, just as we were, to sleep as a man can sleep only after such work and in the hush and silence of the woods. Then I would go back a little, to

Digitized by Google

our lazy horse-play as we filled our pipes after the heavy fifth meal of the day; to our drowsy songs, songs I had not thought of for years, and the way the words trailed off, leaving only the night wind which rocked the Norways themselves to sleep.

"Sleep, sleep, sleep! There was nothing that did not begin and end with sleep. And even while I swore that I knew no such thing as yielding, my head would fall back against the frozen wall of the well that I was buried in. For a time I kept awake by moving my arm—by the pain of it; but after a while even that did not help me. And pretty soon after that I lost all will to fight. I let myself go; I seemed to be falling very slowly. And over me ever swept the endless storm.

"SUDDENLY something roused me—the cry of a child and a woman screaming—until I remembered dully that I was near a house. Then a man's laugh sounded below the screaming, and that somehow freed my legs. I don't know what else did it, or how long it was before I got the other log, as if it had been a human thing, below me, and, dazed and numb, struggled to my feet. Another scream and another laugh, with the mirth dried out of it!

"I was up the side and at the locked door. It went in before my shoulder and I fell against a heavy man. By the light of the fire I saw, not Aaron, but a storm-crazed wanderer, a Menominee, by the look of him, and, half on the bed, half on the floor to which he had struck her, an Indian woman, hardly more than a girl, and a cradle—Aaron's child and wife.

"I looked too long at them—the wanderer was on me, and I went down. But I got my good arm where I wanted it on him, and when I rolled him off a few minutes later he didn't move or even cry for help.

"Then I threw some wood on the fire and looked around me. The house was a good one. There were little comforts, home-made, with a knack learned in the woods, and she and the baby looked cared for in a way I had never credited to Aaron Dill.

"She helped me tie the man's arms and legs and drag him into a corner. I told her that I knew Aaron and that made her feel better. I started to leave them, but she cried then, Indian though she was, and I thought if it had been as bad as that, I'd better stay, and I sat down with my back against a post, before a fire.

"It felt good. But I wanted to get off, alone, like anything else that's hurt. Fixed as I was, I wasn't in any shape to fight Aaron. Fight! When it was all I could do to sit up, even when I was holding on! I did my best to keep in a position I could get up from, when he should come in. But I was dead—I couldn't make it; the post slipped first one way and then the other—I couldn't keep it still—and then it went clear across my back. I knew I was going and didn't try not to, for it wasn't any use.

"Then Aaron's hands were on me. Wrecked though I was, I knew them, for no other man ever had such hands as his. He was lifting me; he seemed to be carrying me, I didn't know where or care—it didn't make any difference, if only he'd get it over and let me sleep.

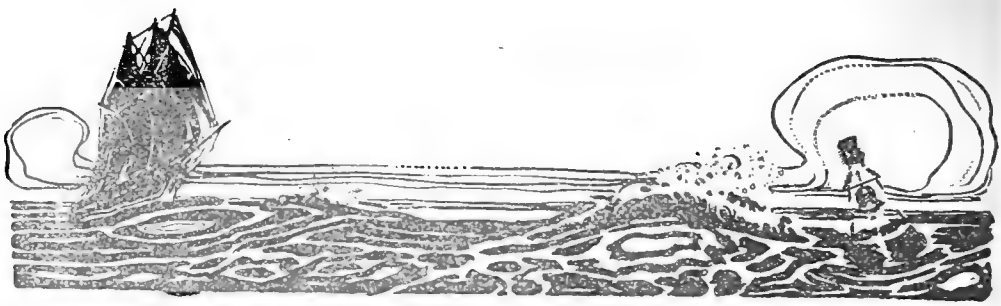
"Then, soft and gentle, as if I'd been a baby, I was laid on a bed, a blanket was put over me, and something was put underneath my head. Then some one took my arm for a moment and hurt it terribly. I opened my eyes. It was the Reservation doctor; the woman was helping.

"I looked from them up at the dark, wide-shouldered, snow-clad figure which had ministered to me and brought the doctor. He looked from his sleeping child to his wife, to the bound, still senseless wanderer, then down at me. He stood like a stag, as always, but I swear that the hand which held mine trembled. He said:

"'Sigole!'

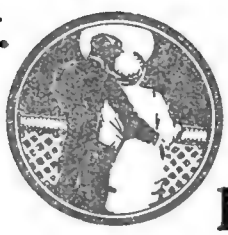
"It was Aaron Dill."

Digitized by Google



A VENTURE IN CONTRABAND

A NOVELETTE



by H. D. CROUZENS

CHAPTER I

AN EXPERIMENT IN OPIUM

WHAT prompted him to engage in this particular hare-brained adventure John Ordway is uncertain. It might have been the *sam-shu*, the longing for novelty or excitement, the immediate and pressing need of more money, or the three combined. As it would not have appealed to him, normally, either as a remarkably thrilling adventure or a sound commercial enterprise, the verdict is strong in favor of the *sam-shu*.

It was his last night in Hongkong. The following morning he was to sail in the schooner *Manuwai* for Honolulu on his way home to New York, and the Captain had requested him to be aboard before daylight. There was a mail-steamer sailing through to San Francisco in a day or two, but John had chosen the schooner for several reasons.

Six months before, after a hard and bitter apprenticeship at magazine work, he had seen his first novel climb through two editions to a successful third, where it took its place among the important books of the year. The experience was unique and thrilling, coming as it did hard upon discouragement, poverty, growing debts and the conviction that he was a failure. Having tasted the emoluments of success and received flattering offers for his next book, he had decided to travel and enlarge his field, planning great things for the future and meaning to work prodigiously on his travels.

But John was young, and he had not yet fallen into any system with his work. He found himself thoroughly enjoying his holiday, and, as royalties kept coming in regularly, had allowed the purposed work to dwindle from day to day to the mere storing away of impressions and skeletonized notes for future reference. He had been in Hongkong two weeks, and during that period had found, for the first time, a hitch in the regularity of his remittances. On casting up accounts, he found that he had been spending a great deal

Digitized by Google

more money than he had anticipated in his carefully planned itinerary.

At an opportune moment he met Captain Cranshawe of the *Manuwai*, and suddenly discovered the advantages of a voyage on a sailing-vessel. There was economy, in the first place; an absence of the fuss and formality of a liner, the opportunity for intimate study of practical seamanship for future literary material, and a chance to see the Islands, of whose charm he had heard so much. It was an enticing prospect and John was inclined to bless the good luck that had thrown the Captain in his way.

On the eve of his departure he made one of a party of club friends to attend an elaborate Chinese banquet. The experience was novel and interesting up to a certain point where the edge had worn off and he had grown tired of the interminable courses of alien food that all seemed to taste alike, the heavy sweets, and the sickish cordials sipped throughout the meal. A Chinese banquet is a delightful affair, but invariably too prolonged for foreign taste. Therefore Ordway, pleading his early sailing as an excuse, broke away while the feast was still young.

As a matter of etiquette he drank, with his Chinese host, several tiny bowls of the strong, high-proof spirit known as *sam-shu*, and the devilment of his Anglo-Saxon friends kept him for some time responding to farewell toasts in the same beverage. *Sam-shu* is distilled from rice, and taken alone has no intrinsically harmful properties.

As John left the banquet he felt no ill effect or undue elevation. His luggage was aboard the *Manuwai;* it was close to midnight, there was a glorious moon and, disdaining rickshaws, he determined to walk down to the wharf where he would find a *sampan* to take him to the schooner, which was anchored out in the stream. As he passed the club it occurred to him that there might be a chit or two still unpaid. He would see the steward about it.

THE club was deserted save by one man. He was tall and exceedingly lean, and the skin over his hollow cheeks was as sallow as that of the Chinese waiters. He was dressed in immaculate white duck and carried an ebony cane ornamented with twining dragons of soft Chinese gold. John had a vague recollection of having met this man casually some time before, but did not remember his name. He was therefore somewhat surprised when the tall man nodded familiarly, and, as John finished his business with the steward, moved over to his table.

"Good evening, Mr. Ordway," said he; "I understand you are sailing to-morrow."

John nodded.

"On a schooner, I believe, to Honolulu? I'm sure we're all sorry to lose you. There are not so many of us good fellows here and a new face is always refreshing. Steward, take Mr. Ordway's order!"

Now if John had had the advice of one of his late companions what ensued might have been avoided. Any one of them would have told him that *sam-shu*, while harmless enough in moderation, will *not* mix harmoniously with Scotch and soda. The lean stranger talked affably and pleasantly, and John was chagrined at the fact that he could not recall his name until the lean man, with considerable delicacy, led up to a pretext for producing a card, on which was engraved: "Eugene P. Tallboys, British Consular Service." His manner was most engaging and John was presently aware that the man was saying things that he wanted to hear.

"If you have never been to Honolulu," said Mr. Tallboys, "you will find it an interesting place indeed—the center of hospitality, charming climate and charming people. The Hawaiian Islands are a wonderful example of progress and metropolitanism established under remarkable conditions. I must confess that, to me, they have lost some interest because they have progressed too far. They are actually going to annex the Islands to the United States. I have been there many times on very delicate business; annexation will ruin it for good and all. Too bad, *I* say. Why not let the Islands alone?"

John was deeply interested. He wanted very much to know what business it was that would go to ruin if Hawaii was annexed to the United States. At the risk of being snubbed he asked, very politely.

"Opium!" said Mr. Tallboys, without reserve. "The Hawaiian Islands have been an inexhaustible gold mine. Under the old monarchical law the stuff was, and still is, contraband—forbidden entirely, you understand, purely to aid a legitimate er—

Digitized by Google

er—what you Americans call *graft*. It kept the prices up to a fabulous height. When annexation takes effect the stuff will enter unrestricted at a duty of six dollars a pound. The margin of profit will be too small for a gentleman to soil his fingers with and all the excitement of running cargoes will disappear. You'd be surprised, Ordway, to know how many men here and in Honolulu have grown rich on opium smuggled to Hawaii."

John grew more interested. Here was romance and adventure at first hand. He would have liked to annex this lean stranger and wring him dry of choice literary material, and he suddenly recalled with a pang of regret that he must sail at daybreak, and the time was growing short. "Steward!" he called. "Bring more Scotch and soda! Go on, Mr. Tallboys; tell me some more. You've got me going."

Tallboys smiled indulgently. "You write, don't you, Mr. Ordway? I suppose the game interests you, and I wonder you haven't picked up a lot of smuggling yarns; the cruise of the *Falcon*, for instance, with a hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth on board. It would work up into good stuff." Briefly and skilfully he drew verbal sketches of several thrilling incidents of the illicit traffic; then he paused and sipped his drink thoughtfully.

"See here, Ordway," he continued as though fired with a sudden resolution. "You like excitement. It's all good 'copy' (I believe that's what you call it). How would you like to take a little flyer at the game yourself? It may be the last time the trick will be turned and there's just enough danger to make it interesting. What do you say?"

The Scotch and *sam-shu* were doing their work. To John his excitement appeared perfectly normal and sincere. Afterward he came to look at it in a different light. "What kind of a flyer?" he asked eagerly.

"Why, it's like this: they've had an epidemic in Honolulu and the town has been in quarantine. The price of dope went soaring, and there was none to be had. It is now worth anywhere from fifty to a hundred dollars a pound there, and the Islands will be annexed in August or September and the bottom drop out of the market. It is only the end of April now and there's plenty of opportunity and time to reap the immense profit, if a man is careful and dodges the Honolulu customs. What I suggest is this: take a little of the stuff aboard with you. There's fun in the thing; you'll get your material for 'copy' at first hand—and there's money! Don't forget that—a lot of money!"

"But—but—where the deuce do I get the stuff? What do I do when I've got it? And how do I get rid of it in Honolulu?"

Mr. Tallboys crooked a finger at the steward and spoke to him in Chinese. The white-clad youth brought a fresh siphon, another bottle of yellow whisky and two tall glasses filled with cracked ice.

"You've no idea," said Tallboys, "how many of us are taking advantage of this last clean-up. I shouldn't wonder," mysteriously, "if there were a few tins aboard your own schooner. I'm really letting you in on the ground floor; though, you understand, I'm only proposing it to you as an adventure. Of course I know that the question of money is nothing to you. I'm something of an adventurer myself, and I've lived out here in the Orient so long that I know the ropes fairly well. Now if you want to take a little flyer at the game I'll show you where you can get the material in a few minutes, put you on to the ropes, and give you a letter to the proper man in Honolulu, where you will have no trouble in disposing of the stuff. It will be cash paid on the nail. What do you say?"

Ordway thought of his depleted exchequer and made a mental calculation. Money *was* an object to him. "How much will it cost at this end?" he asked.

"Six dollars a pound."

John figured hastily. A profit of forty-four dollars a pound at the lowest figure; and the fun of the thing was worth a hundred! Already a story was weaving itself in his brain with the abetment of a certain potent spirit distilled from rice. He raised the effervescing glass before him and slowly drained it. "I'll go you!" said he.

MR. TALLBOYS, after a walk of a few minutes, led the way to a narrow, evil-smelling street and paused before a small store, in the window of which could be dimly seen an assortment of water-nuts, dried ducks, varnished pig and other edibles, flanked by cheap wickerware and lacquered boxes. He knocked

Digitized by Google

and rattled at the latch. There was a sound of creaking within, a loud, animal yawn, and the shuffle of slippered feet over the floor. A voice spoke, questioningly. Tallboys answered in Chinese, in a low tone, and the door was opened. They stood in the dark while a fat Chinese lighted a taper and conducted them into a back room so full of the stuffy, suffocating Oriental smell that Ordway was almost stifled.

"Now," said Tallboys briskly, "how much do you want, Mr. Ordway?"

John's heart was beating hard and his face was a trifle flushed. "How much ought I to take?"

"Oh, enough to make it worth while; say a hundred pounds or so."

"Very well; I'll take a hundred." He took out his wallet and went through it rapidly. Six hundred dollars, gold! It would leave him a bare fifty dollars! Well, he had thrown caution to the winds. He would go the limit.

The Chinaman raised a mat and opened a recess in the wall, taking therefrom a number of dirty tins wrapped in paper covered with Chinese characters. In response to his call two sleepy Chinamen came from the outer room, produced a scale and the hundred pounds were carefully weighed out. Ordway paid over the money and the tins were made into two bundles rolled in matting in such a way as to disguise completely the character of the contents.

"There you are, my boy!" said Tallboys. "And a good investment, too. Finest Hongkong grade, and a snug little fortune if you handle it right. Now listen! Wait till you are well out to sea, then stand in with Sweeney, the second mate of the *Manuwai*. He's an old hand at the game and will tell you where to stow this so that it will be perfectly safe. Give the customs officers a few good Manila cigars. Here's your note with the Honolulu address. Don't worry and you'll get some fun out of this, a good story, and a lot of easy money."

Tallboys bade him Godspeed at the wharf. The two Chinamen accompanied him in the *sampan* with his bundles of contraband and set them down on the deck of the schooner. He was greeted by the sleepy second mate.

"Good evening, Mr. Ordway; I thought your luggage was all aboard."

"So it is," said John. "This is only some curios I've picked up."

He did not know then that instead of "finest Hongkong" he had been sold a very inferior grade of the poppy drug, and he was never to know that Mr. Eugene P. Tallboys, remittance-man and very shady adventurer, on leaving the wharf immediately retraced his steps to the little foul-smelling shop where he was promptly paid the sum of three hundred dollars in gold as his share in the transaction.

John stowed the parcels under his berth for the present and, still somewhat hazy from the mixture of warring stimulants, retired to peaceful sleep and dreams of adventure that would make first-class literature.

CHAPTER II

MISS MAITLAND

HE SLEPT late the next day. The schooner was far out to sea when he awoke, and as the vessel pitched and rolled a patch of yellow sunlight leaped and danced through the open port-hole. He was conscious of a slight headache unaccounted for by the motion of the vessel, for he was a good sailor, and an unpleasant, furry taste in his mouth. Casting back in his mind, he reviewed the events of the night before, till rising, as from a mist, the dark little shop and the lean form and sallow face of Mr. Tallboys became chrystallized in his memory. At first they appeared like the waking end of a dream. Exploring under his berth, however, he felt the matting-covered bundles and a hasty inspection revealed to him the paltry sum left in his wallet.

Viewed in the cold light of the morning after, the adventure did not appear so attractive as it had the night before. However, it would take some time to study it out; and as there was plenty of leisure ahead on the voyage, he did not intend to borrow trouble. He took a bracer from his flask, and by the time he had leisurely donned his clothes his naturally optimistic nature asserted itself. "Jack Ordway," said he, to his reflection in the mirror, "you have probably made an inglorious ass of yourself. But don't crawfish!"

He had thought himself the only passenger. Great was his surprise, therefore,

Digitized by Google

on finding a young lady seated at tiffin with the Captain. "Ho!" said Captain Cranshawe heartily. "Found your sea legs, have you? I was beginning to wonder if you were one of those confounded nuisances, a sea-sick passenger. Mr. Ordway, this is Miss Maitland, of Honolulu."

The young lady bowed and smiled, and John, taken by surprise and slightly embarrassed, did the same.

"I was just telling Miss Maitland that you were aboard," said the Captain, "and how fortunate she was in not having to rely on the company of a cranky old sea-dog like me. She's in luck; that's what I was telling her."

John's embarrassment increased. He saw that Miss Maitland was very pretty and that the Captain was innocently leading him to a bad beginning.

"You are not very gallant, Captain. It strikes me that I'm the——" then he stopped and bit his lip. He was as bad as the Captain, and in spite of himself he felt his color rise. He glanced at Miss Maitland and saw her eyes dancing with amusement.

"Oh, as for that," went on the Captain, "you're both in luck. Young folks get lonely aboard ship without the right kind of company; don't they, Miss Helen? Youth," he continued fatuously, "youth must be served," and with this surprising platitude he rose and went on deck.

Miss Maitland laughed a low, silvery laugh. "You mustn't mind Captain Cranshawe, Mr. Ordway," said she. "He's the queerest, dearest old blunderer that ever was. I've sailed with him before and am used to him. He has the most delicious gift of unconsciously misusing quotations, and I think that sort of thing is as funny as 'Alice in Wonderland,' don't you? I've got some of them written down in a notebook."

She had saved the situation, to John's relief, and after chatting awhile they went on deck. The coast of China was a blue smudge behind them. There was a land breeze and the schooner was running free, the wind humming through her taut cordage. The sun was shining, and the salt spray, flicked from the crests of the long, sapphire swells, freshened the air like wine. Little schools of flying-fish skimmed away from under the bows and a cloud of tireless sea-birds soared in circles or fought for the waste from the galley.

The *Manuwai* was a large, three-masted schooner and, being a pride of her owners, was fitted with all the luxuries possible in a modern sailing-vessel. Her sails and all the heavy work were handled by a donkey-engine. She had a cold-storage plant, for she was built to carry passengers; a dynamo and electric lights and a very capable cook and steward. Her usual run was from Honolulu to the Coast with sugar, but, between seasons of grinding, her owners often sent her to China, Japan and Manila for miscellaneous cargoes.

Ordway and Miss Maitland stood together by the rail, he leaning on his elbow, she standing erect, holding to a shroud, her body giving easily to the motion of the vessel. Presently the Captain joined them, and as he talked to Miss Maitland John had a chance to consider his fellow-passenger.

She was undoubtedly a good sailor. As she stood poised and swaying, her grasp on the shroud was light and she was the embodiment of unconscious grace. She was, John decided, of just about the right height, which in his estimation was a trifle above his shoulder. The hand and arm that grasped the shroud were finely modeled, the flesh rounded and firm, and her whole lithe figure and the slight tan of face and hands spoke of out-of-doors.

John thought he had never seen so really beautiful a girl who possessed also the quality of being so thoroughly wholesome. Just now the mouth drooped a little and the eyes looked a trifle tired, and John found himself wondering how a young girl like this came to be traveling alone, as passenger in a sailing-vessel.

PART of the afternoon he spent in exploring the vessel; later he retired to the cabin with a pad and pencil, having determined to use the abundant spare time of the voyage in writing. He had begun to be appalled at his late indolence. He studied his notes in an effort to select the most congenial of his ideas and presently found himself working industriously.

But it was not literature he was working at; it was sums in arithmetic. Mr. Tallboys had said that opium would sell at from fifty to one hundred dollars a pound in Honolulu. Say seventy-five dollars as a working medium. One hundred pounds

Digitized by Google

would bring seven thousand, five hundred dollars which, less the original cost of six hundred, brought the net total to six thousand nine hundred; a very tidy sum indeed; enough to guarantee him freedom and independence for some time to come. If all went well he would gratify a desire long cherished to visit the South Sea Islands.

At four o'clock Miss Maitland appeared, clad in white flannel and a yachting-cap, a costume which John mentally endorsed as especially becoming. Her eyes were bright and there was more color in her cheeks. "'Sleep, blessed sleep,'" said he, "has wrought changes. I see it has transformed you into a real sea-lady."

Miss Maitland laughed. "And before," she said, "I suppose I was a landlady! Really, though, I am always ashamed of my first few days at sea. I want to sleep all the time. It's an awfully material thing to confess, but I get hungry, too. I'm telling you this to prepare you for shocks at the dinner-table."

"The sea is a great leveller," said John, "and, inspired by your frank confession, I admit that on the deep I am a regular wolf. Anything spiritual I may have about me becomes absorbed in looking forward to the next meal."

"Do you know what I am going to do?" said Miss Maitland, with the air of one who is telling the worst. "I am going on deck to walk so that I can keep awake and not miss the first call for dinner."

"Having heard this awful confession," said John, "I feel it both a duty and a pleasure to accompany you, if you will allow me, and—try to help you keep awake."

The *Manuwai* had a high poop-deck and a top-gallant forecastle, and the only room available for a constitutional was in the waist. It was almost like walking in a circle, so short were the turns; also there were the corners of hatch-covers, coils of rope, spare chains and various other systematic litter to be avoided. Miss Maitland negotiated these with ease, although there was considerable motion to the vessel, but John found it a difficult matter to keep his feet. He plodded bravely along, endeavoring to keep step with her easy, swinging stride, but made poor work of it. By the time the gong rang he was puffing and panting, his legs ached excruciatingly, and he was bathed in perspiration.

"Allow me to compliment you on your pedestrianism," said he as they went below. "You have quite tired me out."

"Indeed!" said Miss Maitland, in some concern. "I'm dreadfully sorry. I *have* been tearing along, to be sure, but it is because I know the deck of the *Manuwai* so well. You see, I've sailed in her before and know how to count steps."

But John's bodily fatigue was off-set by a kind of mental exaltation. Miss Maitland possessed a radiant vitality, a magnetism, a something, he knew not what, that inspired him. The close proximity of their walk, the firm touch of her hand on his arm, and the supple grace of her strong young body had thrilled him; the compelling candor of her eyes, her frankness and simplicity charmed him, and in spite of tired and aching muscles he felt exhilarated and light-hearted as a boy. He foresaw that whatever the voyage might bring forth it would not be dull, and he inwardly gave thanks to the Fates who had provided so congenial a fellow-passenger.

"SOMEWHERE in the Bible," said the Captain, at the dinner table, "it says 'reading maketh a full man,' but for me, there are times when I'd rather pick away at Ah Sing's curry. It's more substantial. Now this afternoon I was reading a book by some fellow of the name of Ordway. It is called 'Time and Tide,' and in it there's a chapter describing how they claw a schooner-yacht off a lee shore. It was sickening. I wonder if this Ordway man is a relation of yours. I remembered the name being the same and thought I'd ask you. His practical seamanship is absurd. Do you know him?"

"Not I!" said John shamelessly. It was his own book and the Captain was criticizing his favorite chapter, produced with infinite care and travail. He glanced at Miss Maitland, but she was demurely sipping black coffee. "I believe I know the book though, Captain," he continued, "and would be glad to have you point out the errors to me when you can spare the time."

"I'll do that, and willingly," said the Captain, and forthwith began a long dissertation on the fatuity of shortening sail at the psychological moment instead of increasing it. "It was recommended to me as a good story," he concluded, "but the

Digitized by Google

writer has a lot to learn. He ought to get some practical knowledge of what he is writing about."

Later, when the table was cleared, the Captain produced a deck of cards and a counting-board. He looked quizzically from one to the other. "Cribbage?" said he archly.

Ordway despised the game, and was about to decline, but Miss Maitland said, laughingly: "Dear, dear! Poor Mr. Ordway! I should have forewarned you. You will simply *have* to play or the Captain will be cross for days. He's a perfect fiend!"

John suggested the three-handed game, but Miss Maitland pleaded fatigue, though she sat for a while and kept score. Captain Cranshawe proved to be one of the strenuous school of card-players, thumping down his telling cards with a bang and muttering under his breath when luck went against him. However, he won several games in succession, which put him in excellent humor. When Miss Maitland had bade them good-night and retired, he jerked his thumb in the direction of her stateroom door. "Fine girl, that!" said he.

"Indeed, yes!" said John.

"I've known Helen," went on the Captain, "since she was that high, and a finer woman never walked God's footstool or trod the deck of a ship." He looked John over with his honest seaman's eyes with unqualified approval. "The man that gets Helen will be the luckiest dog alive. What is it the Bible says, Mr. Ordway, about a man and a maid on a ship in the midst of the sea?"

CHAPTER III

CAPTAIN CRANSHAWE GIVES AN OPINION

THE mate of the *Manuwai* was a Swede named Lundquist. He was a stocky, powerful man, with a wide forehead and heavy, beetling brows; a splendid sailor, according to Captain Cranshawe, and an efficient officer, but so shy and silent as to be almost unapproachable. When Miss Maitland spoke to him he blushed to the roots of his hair. He was a musician of considerable merit, and during his watch below they often heard, through his closed door, the wailing of his violin.

The second mate, Sweeney, was a rakish little Irishman with small, greedy eyes, set very close together, a short, pug nose, and an air of insufferable insolence. John took an instant dislike to the man. He detested his "cockiness" and familiarity, and his gorge rose at the idea of making Sweeney his confidant. However, he was no great believer in first impressions and determined to bide his time until something might occur to give a congenial touch to their relations. It was no time for prejudice or intolerance, for, he reflected, his whole fate and fortune lay in the hands of this cheeky little Irishman.

Miss Maitland kept to her stateroom the greater part of the following day, appearing at about four in the afternoon for her "constitutional." John did some perfunctory writing, but his mind was too occupied with other things to allow of very serious work, and he spent most of the time playing Klondike solitaire or poking about the ship. He had expressed a desire to learn navigation, and that afternoon the Captain, being in excellent humor, essayed to give him his first lesson.

But, though the worthy skipper's intentions were the best in the world, he proved to be utterly lacking in the gift of imparting instruction, and instead of beginning with first principles and progressing by easy stages, involved poor John in a maze of logarithms and soared into dreary and unintelligible flights concerning dog-star sights and artificial horizons till John, wearied and bored, was led to wonder how a man like the Captain could himself have mastered so intricate and incomprehensible a science.

That evening the Captain's good fortune at cribbage and his good humor both deserted him, for John consistently won, and he finally retreated to his stateroom in a huff, muttering about the "dumb luck" of his opponent. John looked at Miss Maitland, who had been keeping score, in mock dismay.

"It seems," said he, "that I shall have to lose for the rest of the voyage to keep the atmosphere sweet. As my luck is with me I won't suggest playing a game with you. There is a glorious moon. Suppose we take a turn on deck."

"Goodness, what a relief! I was trembling for fear that you were going to insist on my doing penance, and cribbage is *such* a bore. Let's go on deck, by all means."

She went to her stateroom, reappearing

Digitized by Google

presently with a filmy scarf thrown over her head and shoulders. John drew a couple of wicker chairs to the rail. The fresh trade breeze was blowing and the sea was broken into short, choppy waves crested with foam. The schooner was close-hauled and there was a pleasant swash from her water-line and at intervals a yeasty cloud of spray was tossed from the windward bow and fell to the deck like rain. A lone bonita kept pace with the vessel, curving like a dolphin, its wake V-shaped and phosphorescent.

"Isn't it glorious?" said Miss Maitland. "The freedom and strength and majesty of the sea! To me it is a mental tonic. It seems to me it ought to be an inspiration for all that is fine and good and ennobling. Do you find it that way, Mr. Ordway?"

"With this weather," said John, "and on this schooner, I admit the possibilities, but my experience is all before me. I have never been on a merchant-vessel before, and that is the only way to get on intimate terms with the sea. Heretofore a sea-voyage has always been to me a rather conventional affair. You see, I've only traveled in steamers with a lot of fussy or tiresome people, or in somebody's yacht, where the principal thing is to avoid breaking any of the thousand and one rules of etiquette. *One* reason why I chose the *Manuwai* was to avoid that sort of thing, and I dare say you are right about the inspiration. I hope so, at any rate."

"I am sure of it. I hope some day to read a story of yours that will show the influence of this voyage in the good old *Manuwai*. I am already looking forward to it with interest."

"A story! By me? Why——"

"Oh, modest Mr. Ordway! Did you think to bury your identity on the *Manuwai* with only a poor little Honolulu girl for a fellow passenger? Why, you actually *blushed* when the Captain found fault with your seamanship. Please tell me how it feels to be a celebrity and have one's work criticized while *incognito*. I quite sympathized with you."

"I fear I am very remote from the celebrity class," said John; "in fact I am surprised at your knowing that the book was mine."

"Oh, I knew you were *the* John Ordway from the first. I loaned that book to the Captain myself. It was quite the rage in Honolulu, and they even had your picture in one of the papers. You'll find yourself something of a lion when we arrive. I hope you won't mind my shining a little by reflected light."

It was said in a bantering spirit, but it gave John some unpalatable food for thought. It was probably inevitable that he should meet her family and friends in Honolulu. If his opium venture went through successfully all would be well, though he wondered how she would consider introducing to her friends a "celebrity" who was a smuggler of opium; and if it failed, what the prospects of said celebrity would be on an island in mid-Pacific with fifty dollars in his pocket. He foresaw a hitch somewhere in the near future.

The last and unthinkable side of the situation was the possibility of being found out and sent to prison. At the same time he knew that he was giving way to a weakness little short of folly. He had known this girl less than forty-eight hours and already he was beginning to be squeamish over nice points of casuistry when he should have been influenced by nothing but the fact that the parcels under his berth held a very significant bearing on his near future. He had, for a brief moment, vainGloriously thrown off the shackles of conventionality, but now he feared that he was not, after all, made of the stuff of adventurers.

HOWEVER, it was only a qualm of irresolution. He managed to dispel it presently, and, urged by her frank and unfeigned interest, tell something of himself and his future plans. They sat thus for some time, exchanging various small confidences, and before bidding her good-night John felt himself on familiar enough ground to satisfy a certain curiosity of his own. "You have been at sea a good deal, have you not?" he asked.

"A very great deal. I have had a passion for sea-travel since I was a wee little girl and try to make one or two trips a year, usually to San Francisco."

"Alone?"

"No, indeed! There are usually friends or relatives going too. Still I should never hesitate about traveling alone, especially

Digitized by Google

with Captain Cranshawe. He is an excellent chaperon."

"And yet this is a long voyage and you chose to make it alone on a vessel manned, when all is said, by more or less rough and ignorant men, with no society of your own kind—I exclude myself, of course, as I'm only a chance passenger—you'll not think me impudent, Miss Maitland?"

"Not at all. I thought you understood. The Captain is such a confirmed gossip that I imagined he had told you all about me and mine for generations. You see, my father owns this schooner—at least he is one of a company that owns this and many others. Captain Cranshawe has been with them since before I was born. Two months ago I went to China with my aunt, who had once been a missionary there. She died a week ago. She is buried in China, as she wished to be, and, finding the *Manuwai* in port, I didn't hesitate to choose her instead of the mail-steamer to take me home. It was a little daring, I admit, but I've written my parents, and, as I have always been notoriously spoiled, I hope to be forgiven."

JOHN had retired to his room and was half-undressed when the Captain, in pajamas, came to the door. He was a little ashamed of his late petulance and bore a bottle and glasses, and John, understanding that it was in the nature of a peace-offering, tendered the solitary camp-chair and a cigar. "Don't be in a hurry, Captain, unless you are sleepy," said he, when the drink had been disposed of. "I want to ask you something."

The Captain lit his cigar, crossed his colossal legs and puffed contentedly. "All right; fire away!" said he.

"I have a confession to make," said John. "I am a novelist—a writer, you understand. In fact, I am the John Ordway who wrote that book which has the misfortune to meet with your disapproval."

The Captain's jaw dropped and he looked at John as though he were a new species. "A writer, eh? Well, well! I never met one before, except the newspaper fellows. Glad to know you—glad to know *it*, I mean," and he solemnly shook hands as though they had met for the first time. Then a shade of embarrassment crossed the Captain's honest face. "As for disapproval, Mr. Ordway, you mustn't take an old sea-dog's opinion too, er—literally. All I found fault with was the practical seamanship. Every man to his trade, you know, as Solomon says. I'm sure the rest of it is a very good yarn indeed—*very* good. I'll read it over more carefully now that I know the author."

"Oh, *that's* all right. Your criticism is most valuable and I hope to improve my seamanship before the voyage is over. The point I'm getting at is this: of course a man who writes has to keep on writing and is continually conjuring his brain for subjects. While I was in Hongkong I heard some talk about opium smuggling and it appealed to me as a subject of enough interest to be of use to me some day. They tell me a good deal of it is carried to Hawaii on sailing-vessels, and as I know nothing about it except what I have heard, casually, and don't want to make the same mistake I did with my seamanship, I thought you might give me some information and advice. In fact," he continued, slyly, "I've been given to understand that sea captains are about the best authority on the subject."

The Captain poured himself a brimming glass and held it, steady as a rock, in his huge left hand. "Mr. Ordway," said he deliberately, "you've come to the wrong shop. All there is to know about seamanship I guess I've learned by hard knocks. I've been at sea for over thirty years, and with my present employers as master mariner for more than twenty. They are honorable gentlemen and have treated me as such, and in all that time I have never taken a pound of that —— filthy stuff aboard my ship!

"My owners are fair to me and I try to be the same to them. I can't answer for my officers or men, but if I caught one of them at it I'd break him—*hard!* It's true that some men who pass as gentlemen have made money that way, but, take it any way you like, it's a dirty business, fit only for rogues and scalawags. The Chinese cook always has opium, but I naturally let him alone, as that's his heathen form of nourishment, same as tobacco is to a white man. I've no doubt he smuggles a pound or two ashore, but that's *his* business—a business fit only for a Chinaman!" and the Captain tossed off his drink at a single gigantic swallow.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

A TALK WITH MISS MAITLAND

JOHN'S dislike for the second officer did not abate as the days went by. There was no question as to Sweeney's ability. As a seaman he was both capable and fearless, and his arrogance and conceit John now felt he could look down upon serenely from his own complacent height of six feet two as the harmless vanity of the small man.

But a new cause for resentment appeared in Sweeney's attitude toward Miss Maitland. He was evidently a spoiled darling of the ports and, in his way, something of a dandy. He dressed a great deal better than either the Captain or the mate and kept himself oiled and brilliantined and scented, with a perpetual curl to the ends of his thin black mustache.

When Helen appeared on deck during his watch he took to greeting her with a self-satisfied smirk of appropriation, and often when her back was turned John saw him look her over with a glance of appraisal that was frankly insulting. He walked with her about the ship and talked, leaning over the rail, always with the ingratiating manner of the complacent "lady-killer," and John had no direct means of knowing whether she approved or not, for she treated Sweeney with the same reserved cordiality as she did the Captain and mate.

John had no more than a healthy interest in the matter. It was, he felt, none of his business. Helen Maitland was a girl thoroughly equipped to take care of herself in any emergency, and not only had he no grounds for officious interference, but there was urgent need of his getting into the good graces of the second officer as soon as possible and staying there. That is what he told himself. Nevertheless his resolution to remain passive was broken at the first opportunity, which occurred during one of the talks that had grown customary after the inevitable cribbage game.

They had renounced the deck-chairs for a half-reclining pose on the low cabin-trunk, their backs against the skylight. Sweeney had come aft, for it was his watch on deck, looked at the card, and with a few words, civil enough, gone forward on the business of reefing the foresail. The mainsail was already double-reefed, for there were signs of a change of weather.

"What do you think of Sweeney?" asked John suddenly.

"Why, I hardly know. This is his first voyage on the *Manuwai*. The Captain says he is a good officer. He is rather interesting to talk with I find."

"Somewhat forward for a second mate, don't you think?"

"Possibly he is. He has master's papers and was sailing-master of a schooner-yacht before he shipped with us, and perhaps that accounts for it. He has had some thrilling experiences and, I believe, has smuggled opium. You might find it worth your while to cultivate him, Mr. Ordway."

"You think that there is romance in smuggling opium?"

"Frankly, no! But then, you see, I've heard so much of it; the bribery and dishonor and treachery of the people involved, all for a poisonous drug to sell to Chinamen! It seems an awful thing to me, for there isn't a redeeming virtue about it. It is all for money, and I can not see how any one could care for money gotten in that way. I can't see any romance about it and the only real danger is that of going ignominiously to prison. But a writer might gloss over the sordidness of it, and with the sea as a background make a fascinating story—at least to those who didn't know."

"Still, I've heard," said John, "that a good many important people in Honolulu have been mixed up with it, directly or indirectly, at one time or another."

"That may be true. I'm really afraid it is; but no amount of precedent would make it respectable or any the less vile."

John hastily changed the conversation to other subjects. This actual echo of the Captain's opinion gave him the uncomfortable feeling of shriveling up into something very small indeed.

That night he lay restlessly awake till long after midnight, deeply troubled. It was perfectly clear that the "romance" of his little speculation had been wholly submerged, but he argued with himself that he was up against a "ground hog case" and it was no time for casuistry or consideration of the opinions of others, no matter whom, he said to himself—and again—*no matter whom!*

It was entirely a matter of self-interest and, indeed, of self-preservation. Seventy-

Digitized by Google

five hundred dollars! And he had fifty in his pocket! Why, the fare by steamer from Honolulu to San Francisco was seventy-five! He *must* carry it through, gamely, in spite of the Captain, Miss Maitland, and his dislike of the second mate. He would approach the latter forthwith and take what help he offered in a grateful spirit. Notwithstanding these resolutions, however, such sleep as he got was uneasy, troubled with dreams that were morbid and foreboding, and he awoke unrefreshed and still in a state of mental unrest.

CHAPTER V

THE SECRET LOCKER

JOHN was neither sentimental nor impressionable to a degree that might be called unsafe. His life, on the whole, had been sane and wholesome. A certain discretion, together with the insecurity of his position in the literary field, had kept him free from intanglements, and the fervent love-affairs of his friends he had viewed either as an amused spectator or a student storing up erotic material for future use. His friends, however, were all of the sophisticated class of city dwellers. He was a good comrade to many women, as he was to men, but he had never met a woman like Helen Maitland, nor had he ever known any woman whose opinion he had given more than a perfunctory consideration.

He knew that her attitude toward opium-smuggling was no more priggish than the Captain's. It was simply contempt for a mean form of traffic, or rather the meanness of the men engaged in it. He also knew that he, himself, was neither mean nor contemptible, nor had he acted from a base motive in the first place when he purchased the opium. His head had been muddled with unfamiliar liquor and the suave arguments of Mr. Tallboys. He admitted to himself that he cared a great deal for Helen's good opinion and had grave doubts whether if she knew the truth she would recognize extenuating circumstances in his case. He felt that he had placed himself in an odd situation and resolved to ask no more blundering questions, subdue his nervous temperament and let the future look after itself.

The following day was black and stormy and found the schooner running before a gale from the southwest. The rain fell in gusty sheets and dingy clouds scudded overhead so low that they seemed barely out of reach of the topmasts. John borrowed a sou'wester and oil-skins and braved the deck for a while, but soon retreated to dry clothes and the comparative comfort of the cabin. Despite the weather, the day was not a dull one. He actually succeeded in accomplishing his allotted thousand words of writing, played cards with Helen, and when, at noon, the mate, who was obliged to find his position by dead reckoning, came below to work out his traverse tables, John found a recrudescent interest in the science of navigation.

He succeeded in penetrating the shyness of the mate, whom he found a far better teacher than the Captain, and he began forthwith upon his first intelligible lesson in navigation. Mr. Lundquist gave him a set of simple examples, and with a treatise on navigation, a chart, parallel ruler and protractor, he and Helen spent a profitable hour with their heads together, deep in the elements of plane and traverse sailing.

Since John had disclosed his identity as the author of "Time and Tide," the Captain had taken upon himself the office of a raconteur. He felt it incumbent upon him to furnish John a fund of his personal experience for future use. There was something almost pathetic in this, for though it was prompted by the kindly desire to help, the Captain had no more the gift of story-telling than he had of imparting instruction.

His stories were always of passengers he had carried or long-drawn tales of happenings ashore. When he spoke of the sea it was in a purely technical sense, and the "wonders of the deep" to him were represented by remarkably swift passages from port to port or the accurate handling of his vessel in a hurricane. Like most sailors, he had no eye for anything else, and no imagination whatever. "I've been at sea," he said to John, "for thirty-odd years, and in all that time I've never seen anything out of the ordinary. The off-color things happen in the minds of you writer-chaps."

He fell into this strain of story-telling after luncheon, prefacing each anecdote with: "Here's something that ought to interest you, Ordway!" and they listened patiently to a series of dry tales illuminated all too rarely with a touch of humor or an

Digitized by Google

inapt quotation. John felt himself becoming bored to extinction when the Captain fell into another strain that instantly brought him to attention.

"You were asking me about opium the other night," said the Captain. John started, flushed guiltily and glanced at Helen, intercepting, to his surprise, a shrewd, fleeting glance from her deep-blue eyes. "It recalled to my mind a thing that happened aboard this very vessel. It was seven or eight years ago. The *Manuwai* was new then and I had a second mate who was a thoroughly bad egg, though something of a genius in his way. He was a confirmed smuggler and on this voyage had a lot of opium he had bought at Hongkong intending to dispose of it at Honolulu.

"He took the carpenter into his confidence and Chips fixed up a secret compartment where they stored the stuff by cutting out a panel in the bulkhead in the second mate's room and making a closed-in locker of a part of the pantry.

"It was a clever enough scheme and would have gone through all right if I hadn't had trouble with the second mate and ordered him ashore as soon as we touched the wharf. He probably took some of the stuff with him and Chips was busy taking the rest out of the locker when I caught him in the act. The locker is still there, though there isn't a soul on the ship that knows about it but me. It's in Sweeney's room. I'll show it to you if you like."

He found a small screw-driver in his desk and led the way to the second mate's room, which was forward of the main cabin, raised the bedding at the foot of the berth and disclosed a small brass screw. This he removed, pried for a moment at an invisible crack, and a blind panel swung open, showing a roomy locker behind. It was a most ingenious arrangement, the hinges being quite concealed by the beading of the panel, and the Captain explained that the diverted space was in a remote corner of a cupboard in the pantry where it stood no chance of ever being discovered.

"I've left it just as it is," said the Captain, "because I'd forgotten all about it until you mentioned opium the other evening. It isn't likely that any one will find it till the *Manuwai* is broken up for kindling-wood, and I hope that time is afar off, as the Good Book says. Now what do you say to a little cribbage for a change?"

CHAPTER VI

MAKING AN ENEMY

THE storm had blown itself out. The wind had hauled round to the northeast and the schooner was once more close-hauled and bowling along with straining canvas as though refreshed by her late struggle with the elements. It was a relief to be on deck again after two days' confinement below and John took several turns about, breathing deeply the invigorating ozone of the trade wind.

Forward, in the bows, a number of sailors were fishing for bonita, a large school of which were rollicking close to the vessel. Some were using the grains, a light, delicately balanced harpoon; others had lines with bits of pork for bait. It was exhilarating sport in which John took a hand and spent an exciting half-hour till the school took itself off and his white flannels were soiled and blood-stained, for the bonita has the rather ghastly habit of bleeding profusely in its death-throes.

On his way aft he saw that Helen was on deck, standing with the second mate near the rail, just forward of the break of the poop. Planning to go below for a change of clothing, he passed close behind them and slowly mounted the short ladder to the poop-deck. But there he paused, his plan forgotten. He retraced his steps, very slowly. Sweeney was talking and John had caught a word or two as he passed. Then, as he quietly descended the ladder, he heard the concluding words—the nub, as it were, of what Sweeney was saying.

It was a story—John had heard it many times—a story that, without being directly indecent, was so suggestive as to be fit only for a bar-room audience. He heard Sweeney snicker at his own wit, saw the look of insinuating appraisal in his eyes, and saw Miss Maitland stiffen, first with surprise, then with indignation and disgust, while a wave of color suffused her face.

"Stand aside, Miss Maitland!" he hissed, through clenched teeth. "Go below, if you please!"

At the same instant he reached forward, clutched Sweeney by the lapels of his coat and shook him till his heels rattled on the deck.

"You dog!" he cried. "You contemptible brute! I'll teach you decency!"

Digitized by Google

Holding Sweeney by the lapel with one hand, he struck him on the face with his open palm; then, releasing his hold, struck him again with the other. It was only a slap—John's concession, even in his anger, to the smaller man, but so great was the force behind it that Sweeney went spinning head-first into the scuppers. "Now, you beast, if you ever, while I am aboard this schooner, dare address another word to that lady, I'll give you the heel of that fist instead of the flat of it! Get up!"

"What's all this?" cried a voice from above. "Mr. Sweeney, what the —— does this mean?"

Sweeney did not answer, but his injured look was eloquent with hypocritical pleading. "Mr. Ordway," the Captain continued, "will you do me the kindness to explain what you mean by fighting with my officer while he is on duty?"

John's rage had cooled and his voice was under control. Helen had disappeared. "I'm sorry, Captain. Mr. Sweeney and I had a personal difference; that's all!"

"Well, you'll please understand, Mr. Ordway, that any personal differences you may have with my officers you can settle ashore or in any way except when they're on watch and in charge of the deck! It's —— bad for discipline. Please remember this as long as you are aboard this ship!"

John was tempted to make an angry reply, but a glance around showed him the truth of the Captain's words. The men of Sweeney's watch were gathered in a gleeful group in the waist. The helmsman was straining on tip-toe in a vain effort to see over the break of the poop, and a cluster of heads in the forecastle showed that the watch below were on the *qui vive* of interest. He turned to Sweeney. "You heard what I said," he muttered, "and if you ever repeat what you did to-day I'll kill you!"

Sweeney started to go forward. "You watch out for yourself!" he snarled over his shoulder. "I'll make you sweat for this, —— you!"

John hastened below. He was half-way through a change of clothing when the Captain opened the door of his room without ceremony and entered, closing the door behind him. "Ordway," said he, "you'll have to excuse my being gruff with you on deck, but you will understand that a public quarrel between a passenger and an officer of a vessel *is* ruinous to discipline, especially if the officer happens to get the worst of it. At the same time I know you to be too much of a gentleman to indulge in needless rowdyism with any one, let alone a smirking ruffian like Sweeney. There is something behind this and I ask you to tell me what it is."

"I did tell you, Captain. Mr. Sweeney and I disagreed; that is all."

"Bosh!" said the Captain. "Don't beat about and about with me, Mr. Ordway. I've come to you as a friend, rather than call Sweeney up on the carpet, but I also come as Captain of this vessel, and as such it is necessary for me to know what the row was about. Helen was there with you. If you don't come out with it straight, as man to man, I'll go to her and get her version!"

His hand was on the knob of the door when John stopped him. "Just a moment, Captain! If I give you the details, from man to man, as you say, will you give me your word *not* to speak of it to Miss Maitland and agree to let the matter rest? You can trust me, Captain, I assure you."

"I'll make no conditions," grumbled the Captain. "I'm master of this vessel!" Then he looked at John steadily for a moment. "All right!" said he testily. "I'll agree!"

"Very well. I struck Sweeney twice because I overheard him telling Miss Maitland a story—a story that was not fit for her to hear."

"What!" roared the Captain. "Why—why—the —— scoundrel! I'll break him! I'll send him forrard! I'll put him in irons! But first I'll break every bone in his —— worthless body!"

He threw open the door with a curse, a gleam in his eye that boded very ill for Sweeney, when John caught him by the sleeve.

"Hold hard, Captain!" said he. "Remember, you passed your word!"

As the Captain hesitated he made a hurried plea for delicacy in dealing with the matter. "Don't you see that Miss Maitland would only be subjected to needless embarrassment?" said he. "Sweeney will never offend in that way again, and any more publicity will only start objectionable gossip. Remember that the men were looking on. For her sake, Captain, let a sleeping dog lie!"

The Captain thought it over. "I sup-

Digitized by Google

pose you're right," said he reluctantly, "but it seems a shame not to take it out of his rascally hide. I'll see to it later, but I want to thank *you*, Mr. Ordway." He gripped John's hand heartily. "I sha'n't forget your part in the matter. I'm only sorry you didn't kill him out of hand."

Just before dinner the Captain called John to his room for a cocktail. "I've kept my word," said he. "Never said a thing. Helen referred to it herself, though, and she appreciates what you did, as I do. And I never mentioned the row to Sweeney at all. I only told him that if I saw any dirty work on his part I'd break his neck first and then send him forrard with the men. Just a little reminder that 'where strife is there is confusion,' as the poet says."

CHAPTER VII

AT THE SHIP'S RAIL

AS THEY ascended the stair after dinner they met Sweeney on the way to his solitary meal. He touched his cap, grudgingly, to Helen, but did not look at her, though he scowled maliciously at John as he passed. There was no thought of cribbage that evening, for even the Captain had had a surfeit of the game during the past few days. He joined them on deck and the three sat for some time talking more intimately than they had yet done on the voyage. The incident of the morning was not referred to, yet John felt that there had been a strengthening between them of the bond of mutual regard and friendship.

Helen brought a guitar from her room and sang Hawaiian melodies in her rich contralto, and after some persuasion Lundquist produced his violin and played surprisingly well his favorite plaintive and melancholy airs. The night was to linger long in John's memory. His encounter with Sweeney was forgotten and, for the time being, the incubus of his opium venture. It was a perfect tropic night; Helen was beside him, bouyant of spirit, thrilling him with her radiant magnetism. The world was very good to live in, and for a brief while as they sat together he was free from care as he had not been since the voyage began.

When Helen retired he carried her guitar below and at the door of her stateroom she turned, as though on impulse, and held out her hand. With just a shade of embarrassment she said: "I want to thank you, Mr. Ordway, for—for what you did!"

John took her hand and held it. "The less said about *that* the better, Shipmate. I don't think you will be troubled again."

"I quite believe that, but *you* may, Mr. Ordway. You have made an enemy, and all on *my* account——".

John laughed. "I'm not anticipating any active trouble, Miss——"

"Shipmate!" said Helen.

"Shipmate, then. And, Shipmate, we have a long voyage ahead, and the—er—the diminutive of 'Mr. Ordway' is 'Jack'!"

"Oh!" she said. He still held her hand, his pulses throbbing. They were both thrilled by the incomprehensible magnetism of sex. Her eyes sparkled and John saw a wave of warm color rise from throat to forehead. "Good-night," she said softly, "good-night—Jack!"

He returned to the deck and for a long time paced to and fro in a state of profound thought. To him, heretofore inclined to singleness of purpose, events were taking a complicated turn. He was under the weight of new responsibilities. He was in love with Helen Maitland, and he had quarreled desperately with Sweeney. His venture in opium was in a very bad way. It tortured and distracted him and he inwardly cursed the credulous folly that had led him into it.

But the issue was too important for any backing down at this stage, and as he no longer had Sweeney to depend on he must find another way. Surely there *was* a way, and it could be found without all this fuss and nonsense. Why, in heaven's name, should he, a healthy, sane young fellow of thirty, chafe and pother and act the irresolute ass over trifles that other men would decide by the toss of a coin? What if the Captain and Helen did disapprove of smugglers of opium? Neither of them need know anything about it!

As he strolled past the galley his nostrils were suddenly assailed by a faint, elusive but disagreeable odor like that of a rank weed blended with charcoal fumes. In the obscurity within he saw burning a tiny, blue-white alcohol flame. He was not unfamiliar with the combination. Ah Sing, the cook, was smoking his evening pill.

Digitized by Google

John lit a cigar to counteract the nauseating fumes and sat on the main-hatch. Here was opportunity if he cared to make use of it. Ah Sing was a capable and intelligent Chinaman who had served as cook in the United States Navy. A few words, guardedly spoken, and John felt sure his opium would be securely hidden, to be taken ashore at Honolulu at his leisure. But could he speak those few words! He knew that he could *not*. Rather than ask help of a Chinaman he would throw the opium into the sea.

What was to be done? He could not go to Lundquist, and confidence with any of the men forward was as impossible as it was with Ah Sing. His own exploration of the bowels of the schooner had led nowhere. He had no idea as to how diligent a search would be made of the vessel at Honolulu, and so far as he knew there were no secret places aboard except the hidden locker in the second officer's room. And why not that? The secret was known only to three people—the Captain, Helen and himself, and it was unlikely that either of the others would again visit the locker. What an ass he had been not to think of it before!

The stars to the north were blotted out. The wind was freshening and a few large drops of rain were falling. It was Sweeney's watch and he was even now bawling orders for the shortening of sail. It was unlikely that he would go below before midnight.

John waited till he was busy tying reef-points with the men and darted below. A single electric bulb was burning in the cabin and he switched it off. He took off his shoes, stole forward to Sweeney's room, felt for the tiny screw and removed it with his knife-blade. Then, with a pulse slightly accelerated, he stealthily dragged the bales of opium from beneath his berth and stowed them snugly away in the locker. When it was done he felt as if a load had been lifted from his mind, and that night his sleep was serene and untroubled.

HIS work was now progressing finely. Two short stories were under way and the new novel was getting its full share of attention. He was back in his stride again, working furiously, and, as he worked, Helen Maitland sat beside him, or wrote from his dictation as he stalked about the small cabin in the throes of composition. Every night they laid out the projected work for the following day, and with her help he made twice the progress he was accustomed to.

"Shipmate," said he one evening as they sat alone on deck, "you are spoiling me. What am I going to do without you when this glorious passage is over?"

"Why," said Helen, "you will probably have to find another amanuensis. Some of your Eastern friends would no doubt be glad to take my place."

"I know no one who would be as willing," said John gravely, "and none as capable as you."

Helen laughed. "You flatter me!" said she. "As if you hadn't a host of friends and all the other things that go with success!"

"To tell you the truth," said John, "what small success I have had so far has brought me nothing but this long vacation, which has bidden fair to demoralize me. I have spent all of my money and am as poor as a church-mouse, and as Captain Flint, the pirate, said, I've got to beat up for more, by thunder! I suppose I have the usual number of so-called friends that any man is likely to accumulate, but there is none with whom I am particularly intimate. I expect I have taken my work too seriously and my play too lightly and never adjusted myself to a happy medium."

He told her some of the struggles of his apprenticeship. "But," said he, "I have learned the value of close friendship. I shall have *yours*, and the memory of this voyage, even though we shall be on opposite sides of the world."

"Oh, Jack, I hope so, and I hope you *won't* forget. I have loved your work, and have loved to think I could help if only a little bit. And, Jack, I want to tell you that you are the best and dearest friend I have ever had!"

They were standing side by side against the rail. Her hand was on his arm and her eyes were on him, wistfully, her face close to his. John suddenly leaned forward and kissed her on the lips. "Dear, dear Shipmate!" said he. Her arm stole round his neck, and for a moment she nestled close to his shoulder. Then she kissed him swiftly and fled to her room without a word.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

OPIUM—AND OTHER THINGS

JOHN stood by the rail, communing with himself. The schooner was pitching uneasily, her whole fabric protesting, her topmasts sweeping the stars. The night air was damp and soggy, there was no wind and the sea had a nasty chop. Forward in the waist he could see the glow of Sweeney's pipe as he leaned against the donkey-house. It was a gloomy night, heavy with impending trouble, and it preyed upon his spirit.

It was not that he had any doubt or faltered in the least in what he planned to do. It was rather that he could not argue himself into sympathy with his determination in an ethical sense. Only for Helen's influence he would have carried his venture through without a qualm or a regret. Indeed, he would have gloried, in a boyish way, in the mischief of it, so that he did not appear honest to himself, even in his sacrifice, and blamed himself for being spineless and puerile.

There was no particular reason for secrecy, for no one knew the contents of the parcels but himself, but he wished to avoid questions and evasive explanations. He hastily descended to Sweeney's room, removed the screw, opened the secret panel and took one of the parcels from the locker. As he did so he thought he heard a door in the main cabin softly opened and closed. He saw no one, however, as he tip-toed back to the dimly lighted cabin, and, taking the parcel, he stole swiftly up the stair. He peered cautiously out and saw no one but the helmsman, but as he prepared to toss the parcel over the side a figure glided out from the shadow and a touch upon his arm startled him so that the parcel fell from his hands. "Jack!" said a low, agitated voice. "Jack, what are you doing?" Between him and the projected beam of light from the doorway he saw a figure beside him wrapped in a kimono and with hair in disarray.

"Helen!" he cried. "Great Scott, how you startled me! What are you doing here at this time of night. I thought you were abed and asleep!"

"I couldn't sleep. Jack, come here! I want to talk to you!" She led the way to the lee side of the deck out of ear-shot of the helmsman. "Sit here for a minute, and please put that bundle down—here, behind us—so!"

He did as she bade him, meekly; wholly mystified, yet feeling that Fate was playing him a shabby trick. She drew the kimono close about her and laid her cool, firm hand on his. "Now, Jack," said she, "tell me all about it!"

"About what?"

"That bundle. What is in it, and what were you going to do with it?"

John laughed uneasily. "Why," said he, "nothing of any consequence. Merely some rubbish I don't want to be encumbered with. I'm getting rid of it by tossing it overboard."

She withdrew her hand and touched the parcel. "It's a great deal of rubbish for one to be carrying, isn't it? Have you any more?"

"About this much again. It's not important, Shipmate. Why do you ask?"

For a while Helen sat silent. Then he felt once more the firm pressure of her hand. "Jack," said she, "you're telling me only half the truth. People don't come aboard ship with pounds and pounds of rubbish only to throw it away. I wouldn't ask you, Jack, only I've had a kind of premonition that you are in some sort of trouble. Don't tell me if you don't want to, or it isn't important, but if I can help you——"

IT WAS the psychological moment when reserve is cast to the winds and pent-up troubles well forth in an appeal for sympathy and confidence. At such moments have empires been overthrown and heroes been made or unmade. He quailed before her candid questioning, but a burden was lifted from his guilty soul as he told the whole wretched story from beginning to end. He told of the *sam-shu* and his weakly yielding up the last of his ready money at the suggestion of Tallboys, told it graphically, and without bitterness, though he did not spare himself. "And now," said he, when he had done, "you know the worst. You are probably thinking what a cheap and futile sort of man I am, as I do myself, but at least you'll have no further objection to my disposing of *this*," and he reached behind for the matting-covered parcel.

"Wait, Jack; just a minute! You

Digitized by Google

haven't explained *why* you want to be rid of it. You have only told how you came to be drawn into smuggling in the first place and I can sympathize with that, but I do not quite see why it is so repugnant to you now. Tell me exactly what it was that made you want to throw this opium, in which you invested your little all, into the sea."

"My self-respect—at least I suppose it is that. The criminal side of me isn't sufficiently developed, I'm afraid, to carry me through. In fact," he went on, with mock ruefulness, "I am convinced that I am unfitted for a life of crime."

"But have you changed about the thing itself? Is your attitude toward smuggling altered in any way?"

"I'm afraid not. I still believe that breaking a statutory law would have left my moral character decently intact. The prospect is not quite the same; that's all."

"Then you must have been influenced by something you have heard since you came aboard; is that it?"

"Perhaps," said John guardedly.

"Was it anything I have said?"

"Perhaps," said he again.

"Then, Jack, I want you to explain this: According to your story you rashly engaged in a rather foolish speculation. It involved smuggling and the breaking of a statutory law, as you say, but you were not averse to this, and are not now. To give this up now means that you risk discomfort and perhaps humiliation and yet, at a careless word or two of mine, you decide to give it up rather than—than *what*, Jack?"

They were very close together. He felt the touch of her rounded shoulder against his upper arm. Loose strands of her long hair were blowing across his face. He could see the light of her eyes and feel her warm, sweet breath.

"Dear Shipmate," said he, "you mustn't take it all on your shoulders. It is my own doing, gladly and willingly. When I knew how you felt about opium smuggling and the contempt you have for the men who do it, it was enough. I want your respect, Shipmate, and to look you square in the eyes, and not go slinking about the deck under false colors. I couldn't, you know, because, Shipmate—dear Shipmate—I love you so!"

He took her in his arms and kissed her, and as her head lay against his shoulder he saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, her voice very like a sob. "Dear, dear Jack! And you would have done this—just for me!"

There was a shuffling movement at the other side of the deck. John stood up and looked over the skylight. A man came up the ladder to relieve the wheel and he heard the helmsman give the course, but before the latter came forward another figure left the weather rail and stole down the ladder; there was a whiff of tobacco and a sudden glow as though a hand had been lifted from an incandescent pipe-bowl. Helen, too, stood up. Both knew the retreating figure to be that of Sweeney.

"Dear," said she, "I must go now. It's dreadfully late. Listen, Jack!" she came close to him and he took both her hands in his. "Will you do something for me—something I want very much? Will you promise?"

"Anything in the world, Shipmate!"

"Then take that bundle back, put it where it was before, and leave it there. Don't throw it overboard and don't ask questions—at least not to-night. I've worried and distressed you and now I must think of a way to help you. And, Jack, dear, I'll tell you a secret. You've asked so many questions—of the Captain, too, you know, and you've been so uneasy and—and—of course I couldn't help seeing it, and—I guessed it was opium all the time! O-o-oh, Jack!"

There was the whisk of a mauve kimono, a patter of straw-slippered feet and she vanished down the companionway.

CHAPTER IX

SWEENEY SHOWS HIS TEETH

JOHN was making great progress in the study of navigation. He had made a stanch friend of the fine-strung, melancholy Lundquist, who privately assured the Captain that John was "a fine faller," and under the mate's able tuition was deep in nautical astronomy and spherical trigonometry. After some pleading, seconded by the mate, the Captain had allowed him to take a "trick" at the wheel, and he now spent two hours daily as the guiding hand of the *Manuwai*. He found no great difficulty in this, for it had come within the scope of his yachting experiences, though he found an added thrill and responsibility

Digitized by Google

in steering a vessel bound upon important business.

But this new occupation was not without its vicissitudes. The Captain had given him privileged hours, from nine to ten in the morning, and from four to five in the afternoon. By this arrangement he had the same officer for both watches on alternate days. This meant that every other day he was under the eye and command of Sweeney, who did his utmost to make his trick at the wheel as interesting as possible. During those periods Sweeney was very assiduous in studying the compass-card and finding fault in a cold, sneering way that made John grit his teeth and rage inwardly.

It was the third day after he had assumed this task, in the morning watch. The mate was asleep below and neither the Captain nor Helen had appeared on deck. Sweeney came aft, swaggering, an ugly look in his eyes. "Did you get the course when you relieved the wheel?" he asked.

"I did," said John.

"'Sir,' when you're at the wheel!"

"Sir!" said John gravely.

"Very good!" said Sweeney, with an ugly sneer. "Then will you tell me why the —— you're four points off?"

John looked at the card. It was perfectly true. "Why," said he, "so I am! The wind must have hauled around. I was steering by the luff of the sail. It's all my fault. I'm sorry—sir!"

"You are, eh? Well, hereafter you'll keep your eye glued to that card! What in blazes do you think a course is for, and what am *I* for if it isn't to trim those sheets and keep her true? You're not sailing a pretty little white knockabout, Mr. Beau-ideal!"

"Mr. Ordway, if you please!"

"Mister nothing! When you leave that wheel you're a passenger, but while you're doing sailor-man's work on this ship you're no better than a sailor, and furthermore, you'll take orders without so much —— jaw about it!"

John leaned his elbow on the wheel and looked Sweeney in the eyes. "Mr. Sweeney," said he calmly, "if I should happen to forget myself and leave this wheel to take care of itself, do you know what I would do?"

"No, nor I don't give a ——!" He kept, however, well out of John's long reach, and, leaning against the rail, his arms akimbo, displayed the butt of a revolver ostentatiously protruding from his rear pocket. John's smile at this puerile parade seemed to enrage him. "While you are at that wheel you 'tend to steering this ship, do you hear? And when you quit being a —— poor sailor and become a passenger, remember that I've got you where I want you, dead to rights—you—smuggler!" With this parting shot he walked forward.

Smuggler! John gazed in amazement at the retreating form of the second officer. What did the man mean and how much did he know? His accusation and implied threat had been too cock-sure and pat to be haphazard guess-work. It occurred to John that he had underrated the cunning of this vindictive little wasp, and he spent a bad quarter of an hour in speculating, finding but one solution. Sweeney must know the secret of the hidden locker, and John had delivered himself, open-eyed, into his hands! Far better might he have thrown his opium into the sea!

When he was relieved from the wheel he went below, but there was no opportunity at that hour to investigate. The steward was bustling between the main cabin and the galley and there was the general morning stir between decks. Sweeney himself came below several times and John fancied that he wore an expression of exultant triumph. He appeared, at any rate, satisfied with the shaft he had launched and gave John no further attention for the rest of the day. It was not till eleven that night that John found the coast sufficiently clear to enter Sweeney's room and open the hidden panel. The locker was empty!

CHAPTER X

THE CAPTAIN PLAYS EAVESDROPPER

"JACK," said Helen, a few evenings later, "we've carefully avoided the subject of—of smuggling since the night when I—when you—well, you know what I mean! But I've tried to think what you ought to do about it. Have you?"

"Not a bit, Shipmate. The subject's off my mind. Why?"

"Well, I said I'd try and think of some way to help you. It's an awful responsibility, dear, but I've decided——"

"Shipmate," said John, "there's no fur-

Digitized by Google

ther need to worry, and nothing to decide. The opium is gone, and the problem solved, so let's forget all about it."

"Gone! You didn't throw it overboard after all?"

"No. I kept my promise to you and put it back where it had been before. I happened to investigate the other day and it was gone. I don't know where and I don't care. It's a relief to get it off my mind."

"And you don't know who took it? Do you think——?"

"Can't say," said John. "I haven't anything to go on. Whoever has it, I wish 'em joy of it."

He took her hand and held it. He could not see in the darkness, but her eyes were very soft, and her smile, illumined with a maternal touch, was very sweet. "I'm glad you feel so about it, dear, and I was going to say that if there *was* a way to take it ashore at Honolulu and sell it, you ought to do it. No woman has any actual scruples about smuggling. It's only a legal crime; not a moral one, and *we* don't make your old laws, you know.

"Only doing it as a trade—and such awful stuff as opium, too, is another matter. Of course, your case was different and it was fine and good of you to be willing to give up what it meant to you just for—for me. And I think you ought to have had back every cent that you invested, but it wouldn't have seemed right to me for you to have taken any more. It wouldn't have seemed honest or—oh, I don't know *what* I mean! It's absurd and illogical—but do you understand, dear?" John did, or thought so, which was just as well; also there were two arms around his neck and two lips very, very close.

There was a deep, subdued chuckle somewhere in the darkness; a huge form loomed up before them and a throaty bass voice rumbled: "Bless you, my children, bless you!" The Captain stood facing them in the darkness. "Excuse an old man for intruding," said he; "'intruding into those things he hath not seen,' as St. Paul says." He struck a match and lit his pipe and by its light they saw him look at them quizzically.

"'O love, how green the world, how blue the sky! 'Tis good to live, but'—but, ain't it —— to die!" he concluded hastily. "I read that in a book of poetry once. The last line isn't just right, I guess. And now, young folks," he continued, "if I can rouse up that rascally steward, you're to come below and I'll pay the penalty of an eavesdropper."

When, a while later, they followed him below they found a collation of all the choice delicacies the pantry afforded, and in the center of the table a bucket of champagne. The Captain was in a jolly humor. "I hope you young folks don't mind an old chap like me celebrating a little, but I want to say that I'm glad you've found each other; and I'm gladder still that you did so aboard my ship. Helen here knows that I've loved her like a daughter since she was born, and as for you, Ordway, I think I know the right kind of man when I see one." He filled their glasses. "I'm only a rough sea-dog and I'm getting old. I've no chick nor child and no romance of my own to look back nor forward to, and it has been the next thing to it to see *your* little romance working out as it has, and here's hoping, dear friends, that it will last forever.

"'Oh! love, it is a wonderful thing,
Beloved from Pole to Pole!'"

The Captain wiped away an honest tear, and took a hand of each. "God bless you both!" said he heartily.

CHAPTER XI

SWEENEY STRIKES

THEY sailed on azure seas, while through the standing fabric of the schooner there played, day and night, the symphony of the trade wind. All day, save at the lull of sunset and dawn, little scurrying clouds fled away to the south and at evening the red sun painted the west with protean splendors of purple and orange and gold. They were in kindly latitudes.

Sometimes they saw, afar off, the purple mist of an island, and teeming life all about them told of the nearness of land. Schools of porpoises rolled and wallowed around the vessel, and myriads of fish which no traveler on a steamer with pounding engines and noisy screws ever sees. Great sinister blue shapes slid silently past, and at rare intervals they caught the silver flash of that swift and beautiful marauder, the dolphin. Snowy albatross from Laysan and Neckar islands, goonies and bos'n-

Digitized by Google

birds wheeled about, and far overhead soared the somber, rakish frigate-bird, keen-eyed and predatory, the pirate of the air.

The voyage was nearing its end. The short stories were done, the new novel was well under way, and John felt real regret at the thought of stepping prosaically on to a wharf and bidding farewell to the *Manuwai*. He had made no plans for his immediate future and was surprised at his assurance and optimism. He ought, he believed, to be worrying and planning, but his mind refused to worry. It was a good world, full of tropic sunshine, trade wind and broad horizons, and the future would take care of itself. He had done good work and now he would do better still, and as he felt Helen's touch on his arm he knew that here was his incentive and his reward. There was a score to be settled with Sweeney, but it could wait, for just now his opium venture looked, in perspective, very mean indeed.

They came on deck one day in the early morning to see looming darkly ahead the cloud-capped island of Oahu. The sea shaded from a deep sapphire to a lucid jade, the long white combers breaking on the barrier reef from Pearl Harbor to the clean-cut promontory of Diamond Head. Black-bodied native canoes with a yellow strip of gunwale were dancing about manned by brown fishermen, and little naked boys swam about the schooner, clamoring for nickels. A long, slim whale-boat was approaching, and as a figure stood up in the bow and hailed them Helen waved her handkerchief and danced excitedly. "It's dad!" she cried. "And there's Tom!" And then ensued a furious exchange of shouted greetings.

The pilot stepped aboard, followed by two or three men in uniform, and then a stout, elderly man with a boy of seventeen. These last two fell upon Helen effusively and it was some moments before she had the opportunity of introducing John to her father and brother, with whom Captain Cranshawe presently shook hands. "Well, Captain," said Mr. Maitland, "I see you have brought this runaway girl of mine home safe. Her mother and Alice are waiting on the wharf to scold you for being an accomplice."

"Safe and sound she is, sir. She has been our mascot, hasn't she, Ordway? Fine weather all the way, and," he winked at John, "the little cherub that sits up aloft——" John, red with anticipation of some good-natured blunder, saw with relief that a customs officer was approaching. The official touched his cap to Helen.

"Glad to see you back, Miss Maitland," said he. "I saw your mother and sister at the wharf, and as you will want to go right home with them I will pass your baggage, if you like, as soon as the doctor is through with his report."

"Thank you," said Helen. "My trunks are in my stateroom, and, Mr. Westcott, this is my friend, Mr. Ordway. Please see to his things, too, won't you? He will be going up town to the hotel as soon as he gets ashore."

She remained on deck, for she could see her mother and sister on the wharf, but John accompanied the officer below. The latter raised the lid of each of Helen's three trunks, closed them again, and placed thereon a chalk hieroglyphic. "Sam," said the Captain, "just chalk up Mr. Ordway's stuff, too, will you? I'll vouch for him."

"No, he won't, by a —— sight!" said Sweeney, who had crept up behind them. "Captain, there is opium in those trunks! This man is a smuggler and his baggage will prove it! I ask this officer to look and see."

"What?" bellowed the Captain. "Confound you, Mr. Sweeney, what do you mean, sir?"

"I mean what I say, Captain," said Sweeney coolly. "This man is a smuggler and I demand that his baggage be searched.

Captain Cranshawe shook his finger menacingly. "Mr. Sweeney," said he, "you are a contemptible blackguard! I've an account to settle with you and I'll see that you never get a ship in this port unless it is before the mast! Sam, I've passed you my word as a gentleman in regard to Mr. Ordway!"

"No thanks for the bad names, Captain," said Sweeney. "Mr. Officer, go through those trunks or you'll hear something drop when you get ashore!"

The customs officer looked uneasily from face to face, till John spoke, white with anger. "I don't know what this man means. If there's any opium in those trunks I didn't put it there, but I ask you to please do as he says. Here, I'll help you!" With frantic haste he began tossing

Digitized by Google

his belongings out of his trunks. Indignant as he was, he felt a cold wave of apprehension. If Sweeney said there was opium in his trunks, it must be there, and Sweeney himself had put it there! A clever scheme —fiendishly clever! John could feel the handcuffs on his wrists!

AND yet they found nothing! In all the litter that covered the floor when the trunks were emptied there was only John's clothing and personal effects, and not a single dutiable article. The officer looked at Sweeney in angry bewilderment and Sweeney stammered and turned white. A strong hand caught him by the collar and for the second time during the voyage he was lifted clear of the floor and shaken till his joints cracked. "You skulking rascal!" cried Captain Cranshawe. "What do you mean by this? Speak up, or I'll——"

He stopped abruptly. Something that glistened had shown beneath Sweeney's flying coat-tails. The Captain clutched at it and drew forth from a hip-pocket a flat tin bound with a strip of dirty red paper on which were Chinese characters. A hasty search of the now cringing Sweeney disclosed five more tins on various parts of his person, and the Captain tossed them on the table triumphantly.

"There," he cried; "that will hold *you*, my bucko! What the —— you wanted Mr. Ordway's baggage searched for is beyond me! Sam, take charge of this rat; I must be on deck. Come along, Ordway, we'll wind this business up later on. 'The way of the transgressor,'" he concluded as he stepped on the quarter-deck, "is ——!"

The sails were furled and a fussy little tug was maneuvering them alongside a wharf. Helen, bidding him follow and be driven to his hotel in the Maitland carriage, darted down the gangway and was enthusiastically hugged by her mother and sister. John bade temporary farewell to Captain Cranshawe and the mate, left his disordered baggage for the present, and followed Mr. Maitland and Tom down the gangway.

Sweeney's conduct had been sufficiently mystifying; here was another puzzle. Flying above the customs warehouse was the United States flag, and for the first time he noticed that the caps of the uniformed officers bore the insignia: "U. S. Customs."

CHAPTER XII

A TWELVE HUNDRED FOOT DROP

HE SAT in his room at the hotel, trying to figure it out. He had ridden to Waikiki Beach in one of the archaic mule-cars that still obtained on King Street, and had a refreshing swim and supper on a pavilion overlooking the sea. It was the twenty-ninth day of June. The hotel-clerk had told him that annexation had taken formal effect just two weeks previously, and the Hawaiian Islands were now a Territory of the United States. Tallboys had said that this would occur in August or September, but he had either been mistaken or lied about it for reasons of his own. There were newspapers in Hongkong, but John had never read one.

Tallboys had referred him to Sweeney. Therefore it stood to reason that Tallboys had "worked" both Sweeney and himself, knowing the date of annexation, by inveigling them into taking opium that would not pay for the risk involved. So much of the mystery was fairly clear, but why had Sweeney, his own pockets stuffed with contraband opium, allowed himself to be hoist with his own petard? Something in the affairs of the second mate had gone agley, but what, and why?

The telephone-bell rang. "Hello!" said a voice at the other end. "Is this you, Jack?"

"Yes, Shipmate!"

"Ahoy, ahoy! Have you been getting into any more trouble, sir?"

"Not as yet. Give me time. When am I to see you?"

"To-morrow at two, if you have no other engagement. You're to spend the whole afternoon with me and stay for dinner. Are you willing to make a martyr of yourself?"

"Surely; in spite of battle, murder and sudden debts, as the Captain would say."

"Good! Come at two, sharp; and oh, Jack! Can you drive?"

"After a fashion."

"Good again! You're to be my coachman and drive my ponies for me. Don't forget about dinner, dear; there are some people coming expressly to meet you!"

The Maitland home was at the end of a long carriage-drive of black lava sand

Digitized by Google

through an avenue of royal palms. The house itself was aflame with scarlet Bougainvillea and the clustered trumpets of the orange-colored Bignonia. Helen met him at the porte-cochère where two ponies stood hitched to a surrey. Her eyes were dancing and there was a little spot of unwonted color on each cheek. "Not that way," said she, as John turned the ponies down the long drive. "The other way, Jack. Out to the barn. Here, let me do it!"

She took the reins, turned the team by a back road to the stables and drove to the rear of a luxurious barn of cut stone. "Now, get out here. Be quick! The team will stand."

John followed her through a small door into the harness-room. She bade him remove a heap of old harness, feed-sacks and blankets from a far corner and when John had done so he stood up and rubbed his eyes. There before him on the floor were two parcels covered with matting that looked strangely familiar.

"Hurry!" whispered Helen. "Take them out and put them in the back of the surrey."

"But, Helen! What does this——"

"Hurry!" she cried again. "No one must see us! Wait till we are away from the house!"

He lifted the parcels into the rear of the carriage, and when they had passed through the gate and the ponies were trotting briskly along Beretania Street, he turned to her with a comically painful look of inquiry. Helen hung her head and looked at him slyly. "Are you ashamed of me?" she asked.

"It all depends," said John. "Perhaps, when I am able to make head or tail of what this means, I may know. Speak up, Shipmate, and save a poor wretch from doddering imbecility!"

Helen touched his arm and pointed to a broad macadam road just ahead. "Turn to the right here," she said. "This is Nuuanu Street and we are going for one of the most beautiful drives in the world—to the Pali." She laughed her low, reassuring laugh. "You stupid boy! You certainly are *not* fitted for a life of crime! If you hadn't had me for an accomplice, that horrid little Sweeney would have had you in all kinds of trouble. This building to the right is the Royal Mausoleum, Jack. Most of the kings are buried there, except Lunalilo——"

"But how—never mind the kings!—where did you get those parcels?"

"Out of the locker in Mr. Sweeney's room, of course! They were not in your room when I looked for them, so I tried the locker and they were there. I'm sorry I had to worry you by letting you think Sweeney had stolen a march on you, but if I had told my plan you would have objected and tried to keep me from having my own way, which would have been unpleasant.

"I made up my mind what to do the night you were going to throw the opium overboard. There was no danger of my trunks being very thoroughly searched, as my character has always been above reproach, and so, for your sake, I became a bold, bad smuggler. It's terrible! If my parents knew it they would disown me. Isn't that perfume delightful? It's wild ginger—*awapuhi*, the natives call it; and those little white threads running down the mountain are cascades."

"But Sweeney!" said John. "What did *he* mean? Why did he accuse me of smuggling when he himself——"

"Probably because he heard us talking that night when he was skulking on the other side of the skylight. He knew nothing about the secret locker. He had opium of his own stored away somewhere else and thought you were taking yours ashore in your trunks. That's why he made that scene in the cabin. Captain Cranshawe telephoned me about it yesterday afternoon. And where do you suppose they found the rest of his opium?"

"Oh, I pass!" said John. "Every one knows things but me. I'm the original Question Mark—accent on the last syllable, please."

"In Ah Sing's room, hidden in his mattress and in all sorts of nooks and hiding-places. They were in it together, and poor Ah Sing is under arrest, too."

"A lesson to Ah Sing," said John, "to avoid bad company in future. I shudder to think of the close shave I've had, but there is the poor, old shop-worn bromide 'All's well that ends well' to fall back on. The question is, what use is this stuff now that we have it, after all this trouble? Annexation has done away with the fabulous profits of the gifted Tallboys and I don't

Digitized by Google

care to tempt Providence further by dealing with the local agent of that same Tallboys."

"You needn't fear," said Helen. "My brother Tom found out all about that. I had to take him into my confidence or I should never have gotten the opium hidden away in the barn. Tom's a brick. He took some of the opium to a man that knows all about it and learned that it is a very poor grade and you can get for it just about what it cost you. Perhaps a little more. You must attend to it to-day when we get back to town. I think you had better get it over with as soon as possible, don't you?"

"I don't know," said John thoughtfully; "there are other things to be considered. I'm not sorry I turned smuggler. It has brought adventure, of a kind; and romance, too, though not the sort I bargained for in the beginning; and it has all turned out very well. But that part is over. Now it comes to a question of common-place traffic in opium with a Chinaman, and taking his money for it, and I confess the prospect isn't attractive. I'll think it over. Now let's talk of something else."

THEY were near the summit of the Pali, where the cliffs on either side draw close to the road, forming a narrow pass through which the trade wind rushes, blustering and violent. They passed the last brief turn in the road and there broke upon their sight the panoramic view of the windward side of Oahu. From the foot of the Pali, far below, the level country stretched out in a great plain to the shore of Koolau and Mokapu and met the sea in a long, well-defined fringe of white foam. John gasped with delight, for the scene was majestically beautiful.

"If you go over and stand by that railing," said Helen, "you can see straight down. It is a sheer drop of twelve hundred feet, where Kamehameha drove the Oahuans over. Nobody escapes being told about that."

At the foot of the cliff was a deep tangle of trees and shrubbery. "It's wonderful," said John, "and fascinating! Does any one ever go down there to look for dead Oahuans and things?"

"I think not," said Helen. "It would be very dangerous, if not impossible."

John picked up a stone and tossed it downward. "Ever since I was a boy," said he, "I've had a passion for throwing things from heights. You can tell the distance, you know, if you remember the formula. Sixteen feet for the first second, and then—Helen, I have a bright idea!"

He seized one of the parcels of opium, carried it to the cliff's edge and threw it over. When the sound of crashing branches and a faint thud reached them from below, he threw over the other parcel. "Twelve hundred feet is exactly right," said he, "though I admit I've forgotten the rest of the formula. Don't look so glum, Shipmate! I've been wondering what to do with that stuff and the problem is solved. We're rid of a burden that has weighed about a couple of tons. *Please* say you're glad it's over with!"

"Oh, Jack, I am! But what about the money? It seems a shame to lose it after all the trouble and risk and everything!"

John resumed his seat in the carriage. "There's no use my trying to be a hero," said he, "and I might as well confess. I got my delayed letter this morning at the post office. It arrived in Hongkong two days after we left and was forwarded here on the *Doric*. There was a draft in it and a request for the new novel in a hurry. I have learned at least one lesson. I'll *never* tackle crime again single-handed. Hereafter yours shall be the guiding hand!"

"Indeed it shall not!" said Helen. "Once is quite enough. It will take *years* to clear my conscience as it is. For your sake I've hoodwinked friends who trusted me, broken my country's laws, and my fair name for honesty is only a sham. I'm a whited sepulcher! How can I ever hold my head up again?"

The ponies had turned their backs to the wind and were drifting slowly on the return road of their own accord. No one was in sight. John saw the lurking mischief in her eyes and saw, too, that she was even now holding her head up, very demurely, and her lips were very close to his.

Digitized by Google

CONFIDENCE

Doubt never raised a man's salary—confidence makes many fortunes.

The purpose of the International Correspondence Schools is to give a man confidence in himself by training him in the line of work he prefers.

I. C. S. Training is today one of the greatest recommendations that a young man can have. EMPLOYERS VALUE IT BECAUSE IT IS REAL.

A man with I. C. S. training applies to such concerns as Baldwin's Locomotive Works, Cramp's Shipyard, Westinghouse Electric Company, the great Railroad Systems, or any other branch of industry, with the confidence that he will have an ***opportunity.***

This is a fact proved by hundreds of I. C. S. students holding important positions in practically every big plant in the United States. Over 400 I. C. S. students voluntarily report each month an increase in salary as a direct result of I. C. S. training.

With this truth before you, is it not worth your while to inquire just how the I. C. S. can help you?

To do this it is only necessary to mail the coupon marking a cross opposite the position you prefer.

In turn, the I. C. S. will show you how to accomplish what you desire.

If you mark and mail the coupon at once you will be entitled to the extraordinary benefits being offered all applicants during June and July to celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of I. C. S. success.

Upon receiving the information if you are not perfectly satisfied that the I. C. S. can help you, there is no obligation to proceed further. On the other hand if you believe that you are not different from thousands of other young men, the I. C. S. will place at your disposal what is recognized as the best money-making training that can be given to any man.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS,
Box 884, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

Automobile Running	Civil Service
Mine Superintendent	Architect
Mine Foreman	Chemist
Plumbing, Steam Fitting	Languages— Spanish, French, German, Italian
Concrete Construction	Building Contractor
Civil Engineer	Architectural Draftsman
Textile Manufacturing	Industrial Designing
Stationary Engineer	Commercial Illustrating
Telephone Expert	Window Trimming
Mechan. Engineer	Show Card Writing
Mechanical Draftsman	Advertising Man
Electrical Engineer	Stenographer
Elec. Lighting Supt.	Bookkeeper

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

Digitized by Google

My wife's gone to the Country—but there's *Kellogg's* in the pantry. Hurrah!

NONE GENUINE WITHOUT THIS SIGNATURE

W. K. Kellogg

THE CHARLES SCHWEINLER PRESS
Digitized by Google